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Ian Allan







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Timbercraft display cabinet winners

The two winners of our October competition to win Timbercraft display cabinets for 1:24-scale Routemasters are S. P. Makin of Kirkby, Liverpool and D. Leigh of Warrington. Congratulations to you both and to all who knew that the correct answers were that Park Royal bodied most Routemasters, the SRMs commemorated the Queen's silver jubilee and RM664 ran in silver for four years.

2007 RALLY CALENDARS

Once again, *Buses* will publish its eagerly sought-after Rally Calendar & Museum Guide in our March and April issues.

Each 16-page guide will be included free inside the magazine, complete with photographs and details of where and when rallies, running days, swapmeets and enthusiast fairs are being held throughout the UK and Ireland. Part 1 in March *Buses* will list events taking place up to 30 June. Part 2 in April *Buses* will cover the rest of the year.

If you are planning any of these events for 2007, don't miss the opportunity to have it promoted free of charge.

Please send the details to the editor at **Buses Rally Calendar, PO Box 14644, Leven, KY9 1WX**, fax 01333 340608 or e-mail buseseditor@btconnect.com to arrive no later than **Friday 12 January** for Part 1 or **Friday 2 February** for Part 2.

CONFUSED COMPETITION QUESTIONS THAT MUST NOT BE IGNORED

As the drip-feed of government bus policy change seeps out on an apparently weekly basis, we're beginning to piece together a jigsaw of what might become of the 1986 deregulation model.

Transport minister Gillian Merron says that whatever is rolled out at least across much of England won't be what it was 20 years ago. Nor will it be what we have in London. But it might have elements of the London success in it. And community secretary Ruth Kelly has hinted that the Department for Transport plans to somehow reform the PTEs and PTAs. The words on that subject imply some manner of strengthening of these bodies, but the Whitehall-speak in which her initial announcement is couched is as impenetrable as any utterance ever penned by *Yes Minister's* Sir Humphrey Appleby.

Whatever Douglas Alexander and his colleagues eventually release as the government's plans for better bus services, we hope that, among all the other topics addressed, it does something to unravel the malign influence that the competition authorities have had over the operation of buses and scheduled coaches.

For if ever there was a case for reform in this area, it has come in the Competition Commission's ruling on the Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture (p8 this month). Perhaps the fault lies with the legislation under which the commission operates rather than the commission members' interpretation of their brief, but this ruling highlights again the absurdity of viewing buses or coaches as a discrete market rather than part of a wider choice available to the traveller.

While the operators and some of the other interested parties argued forcibly that these particular coach services compete with trains and private cars between the four Scottish cities, the commission will have none of it. Trains — on which bargain fares are available in advance — are apparently too expensive to be real competitors and it's evidently a joke to imagine that car owners would catch a coach.

In that sense, the commission is at least consistent. It reached a similar conclusion last year when clearing First's award of the Greater Western rail franchise, saying there was little synergy between buses and trains in the region. But its stance is at odds with that of its predecessor, the Monopolies & Mergers Commission, which ordered National Express Group to sell Scottish Citylink after it secured the ScotRail franchise. What was sauce for the MMC goose clearly isn't for the Competition Commission gander.

If today's commission was aiming to restore competition to where it was for a long period in the past, then the divestment ruling might make sense. But Stagecoach and Citylink were locked in a head-to-head fare-cutting battle for a mere 13 months. Yes, *months*. Not years. Seemingly, this was part of a three-way scrap between those two and National Express from which all signs suggest there would only have been one victor. It's just that none of us can say who that victor would have been.

If some of the routes are sold to a new independent competitor as the commission wants, there must surely be every risk that the new owner will be in a weak position and that the brief competition of 2004/05 will not be sustained long term. In pursuit of textbook purist competition, the commission shows no sign of helping passengers in the long term.

If the new rules require competition controls, then they must surely be guided by the needs of the bus and coach user, not by outsiders' view of a market that doesn't exist as they seem to see it.

ALAN MILLAR

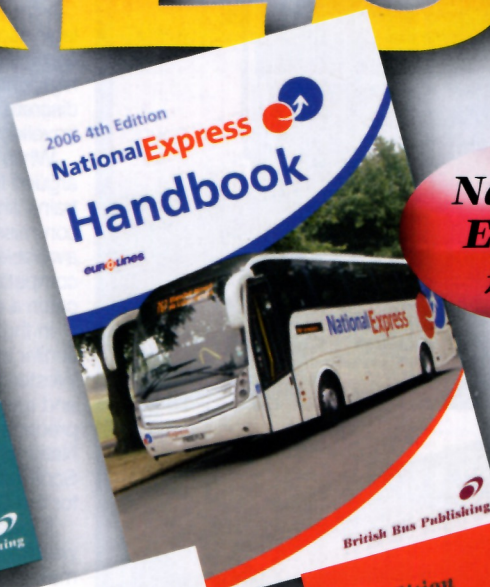
Cover picture: The Wrightbus hybrid double-decker, based on a VDL DB250 chassis, in Parliament Square, London on 31 October. RUSSELL YOUNG

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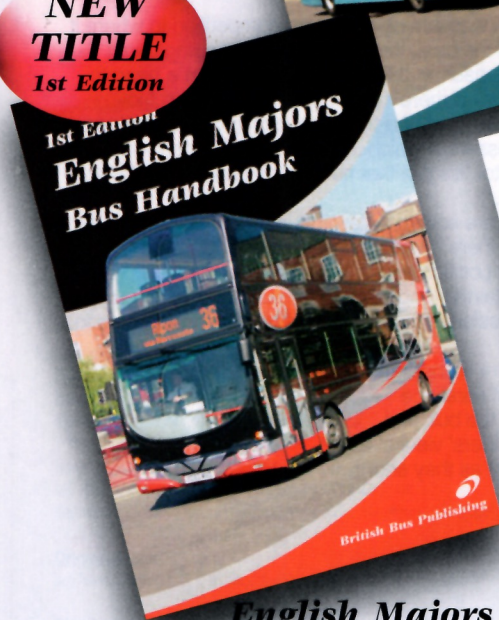


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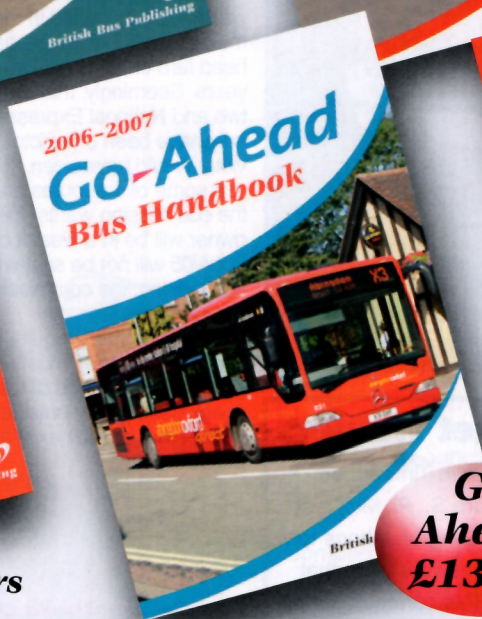


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Govt promises beefed up PTEs, but no return to pre-1986 regulation

The steady trickle of government plans to reform bus services continued through October, with a local government White Paper promising as yet unspecified strengthening of passenger transport executives (PTEs) and authorities (PTAs) and transport minister Gillian Merron insisting there will neither be a return to pre-1986 regulation nor an extension of London-style franchising to the English regions.

The minister's announcement appeared to sideline the long anticipated House of Commons backbench transport committee report on buses — published symbolically on 26 October, the 20th anniversary of deregulation — which calls for quality contract franchising in the six PTE areas. The same day, in a blistering attack on the report, Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter said committee chair Gwyneth Dunwoody had made herself a mouthpiece for 'dinosaur' PTEs that have failed the bus.

Speaking at a Commons meeting hosted by pro-regulation Manchester Blackley Labour MP Graham Stringer, Gillian Merron insisted that the government isn't going back to the 1980s. 'They were not halcyon days,' she says. 'Decline has been in freefall since the 1950s'.

She wants PTAs to use congestion charging and bus services to 'rebalance' the transport market away from car use. 'There is a lot to learn from London,' she says, 'but London is unique. You can't just transplant it.'

Community secretary Ruth Kelly's local government White Paper, which aims to transfer central government powers to local councils, says the Department for Transport will reform the six PTA/PTEs 'to strengthen leadership and enable a more coherent approach to transport in our biggest cities', 'devolve powers to local authorities to ensure that the bus services their communities need are delivered', provide 'more powerful local authority representation on the PTAs in keeping with the principle that greater powers require stronger and clearer leadership' and address 'criticism that transport powers are fragmented between PTAs and local councils'.

While the transport committee report acknowledges that deregulation has neither



Above: The Merseyside Transport Trust marked the 20th anniversary of deregulation with a running day between Woolton and Penny Lane, Liverpool, and on cross-river routes, on 22 October. Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean 1032 (A112 HLV) was among the participants. **ANDY RIGBY**

networks and high-frequency core routes have had a detrimental effect.

They want the government to test different variations of the London contracting system in PTE areas over the next two years, and for traffic commissioners to be empowered to penalise operators and transport authorities that fail to deliver their side of a contract. 'Quality contracts would enable PTAs to develop the integrated network they — and passengers — want. The Department for Transport must recognise the futility of continuing to insist that the PTAs work within a system they do not like and apparently do not feel that they can trust to deliver a better bus service,' they say.

Speaking at a conference in Leeds, Brian Souter said the report is 'nothing more than regurgitated regulation'. 'The few practical proposals suggested...that would actually improve bus services, such as strengthened powers for traffic commissioners and better bus priority measures, were raised by bus operators a long time ago and can be achieved right now under the current system. Gwyneth Dunwoody has made herself the mouthpiece for the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG), the super-quangos created in the 1960s to operate public transport in the metropolitan areas.'

He turned up at the conference with a cardboard cut-out dinosaur called 'ptegasaurus', which

Stagecoach had earlier deposited outside PTEG's offices in the city, and condemned PTEG as the 'bureaucratic beast from the 1960s lagoon'.

'Their habitat is large office buildings, they have long chains of command, are painfully slow at making decisions and they feed on large sums of public money. They have been the catalyst that has accelerated the decline of bus use in our biggest cities,' he said. 'We believe the current system needs to be improved — and quickly. But unlike the transport dinosaurs, we understand that people who rely on lifeline bus services need practical measures that will help make buses faster and more reliable.'

While London has increased bus spending by 150% since 1985, he says PTEs cut it by 75%, metropolitan councils have failed to protect buses from traffic congestion, no significant bus park-&-ride operations have been started in any PTE area, and over 80% of the decline in bus passengers in the six city regions occurred while former PTE bus companies remained in public ownership.

PTEG rebuts these claims, blaming the 80% decline on deregulation, saying that PTEs are spending 37.4% more in real terms on subsidised services than five years ago, that rail rather than bus-based park-&-ride is more appropriate in their areas and that more bus mileage is lost through staff shortages and vehicle condition than traffic congestion.



arrested nor accelerated the 50-year decline in bus use, it believes quality contracts could close the gap in bus use between London and the major English conurbations. Bus journeys per head of population in the West Midlands, Tyne & Wear and Merseyside are about half those of London, and nearer one third in Greater Manchester, West and South Yorkshire. The MPs accept that population decline and out-of-town shopping malls have played a part, but they were persuaded by South Yorkshire PTE director general Roy Wickes's view that poor reliability, fares rises, unstable

Left: Stagecoach's bus-eating ptegasaurus and Gwyneth Dunwoody planted outside the PTEG offices on 26 October.

Stagecoach/Citylink ordered to sell north-south services

The Competition Commission wants the Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture to sell some of its services on the Glasgow-Perth-Aberdeen and Edinburgh-Perth-Inverness 'Saltire Cross' routes to a 'suitable' new and independent operator in order to restore competition and drive down fares.

The ruling, which the joint venture says 'runs a serious risk of jeopardising the future of inter-city coach services in Scotland', follows the commission's provisional conclusion (*Buses* October) that the joint venture could lead to higher fares and reduced services. It says fares have increased by more than costs on some routes since the venture — owned 35% by Stagecoach, 65% by Citylink owner ComfortDelGro — was formed last year.

Commission chairman John Baillie says: 'Customers benefit from competition and we do not see how this joint venture can preserve these benefits for passengers when previously these companies had been competing vigorously for their custom. When Stagecoach's low-cost Megabus service and Scottish Citylink had been competing on these routes, passengers could take advantage of the lower fares and the choice of operator that resulted.'

Stagecoach and Citylink only competed on the two routes from

August 2004 until the joint venture was signed 13 months later. Before then, Citylink largely had the routes to itself, other than a few National Express Anglo-Scottish journeys, which continue today. During that time, Stagecoach made repeated approaches to buy Citylink from ComfortDelGro, which also was approached by another unnamed buyer believed to be National Express, with whom Megabus competes in England and Wales.

While Tom Wileman, the Stagecoach executive who is managing director of the joint venture, says the sale of either the Megabus or Citylink services on the two routes 'will reduce competition by undermining the ability of coach services to compete with the train and the car', Prof Baillie argues that coaches serve a separate market.

'Previously, these were the only two effective coach competitors on these routes and there remain significant barriers that would prevent other firms from entering this market,' he says. 'Other forms of transport act as only weak constraints, if any, on coach fares. Rail fares are generally too high in comparison to act as a constraint and there was insufficient evidence to persuade us that the car was a constraint. Coach offers a different type of service and one that is valued by its passengers.'



Above: Megabus-livered Park's of Hamilton KSK 983, a Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12(T) operating one of the 'Saltire Cross' services into Glasgow. **MURDOCH CURRIE**

The commission intends to consult publicly before the end of the year on terms for a suitable divestment remedy. 'We consider that the best solution is to require the joint venture to sell certain of its Megabus-branded or Scottish-Citylink-branded services to a suitable purchaser to restore competition, thus bringing back the benefits of competitive fares and service frequencies to passengers,' says Prof Baillie.

As Megabus is a Stagecoach national brand, there seems more likelihood of Citylink departures being sold. Names already mooted as possible buyers include National

Express, which owned Citylink until 1998, when the Monopolies & Mergers Commission (the Competition Commission's predecessor) ordered it to sell it after winning the ScotRail train franchise. Another is Rapson's, which part-owned Citylink before NatEx, and which ceased operating Citylink and NatEx diagrams after the joint venture was formed. Given the Competition Commission's different view of coach/rail competition, FirstGroup — which has held the ScotRail franchise since October 2004 — might also be considered a suitable independent buyer.

Go-Ahead pays £3million for franchisee Marchwood

Go-Ahead Group has paid £3million cash to buy Totton-based Marchwood Motorways, which adds 51 buses and coaches to its 80-vehicle Solent Blue Line business.

Marchwood already operated 19 DAF buses on behalf of Solent Blue Line on Southampton city service 18/19 (Millbrook-Thornhill) and other services under a long-

established franchising arrangement. That operation will continue from the Totton depot, as will Marchwood's coach business.

Solent Blue Line is assuming £1.4million of debt from Marchwood, which made an operating profit of £535,000 in the year to 31 March on £4.1million revenue, a margin of 13%.

Below: Marchwood Motorways 509 (M846 RCP), a Northern Counties Palatine-bodied DAF SB220, running a Solent Blue Line-franchised service. **MARK LYONS**



McKindless buys King Long bus

One of Scotland's largest independent operators, McKindless of Wishaw, has taken delivery of one of the first Chinese-built King Long buses to operate in the UK. The Cummins-engined XMQ6113 is similar to the large fleet of right-

hand-drive King Longs operated in Malta and is part of a larger batch that McKindless is buying for its Hamilton-Lanark service. They are the first new buses the company has bought since it started trading in 1987.

Picture by MARK ALLAN



Veolia takes Longs route to further growth in Wales

French-owned Veolia Transport has further tightened its hold on the contract bus and coach market in South Wales by purchasing 46-vehicle Long's Coaches, based at Abercraf, 16 miles north-east of Swansea. The deal, completed on 18 October, places Long's 60 staff under the control of Veolia-owned Pullman Coaches, based at Crofty west of Swansea.

Veolia Transport UK chairman John O'Brien says: 'We have been impressed with the Long's business and particularly the team of loyal and dedicated staff. The base in Abercraf is in a prime

location to help us further develop our business in South Wales. This deal also continues our strategy of growing the business while strengthening our capability.'

Pullman managing director Charles Lewis says: 'Current manager Gareth Evans and his colleagues have built a solid business and their operation will fit well with our existing businesses and our plans for the future. As part of Veolia Transport, I am enjoying the opportunity to grow a business I started 17 years ago and realise the potential of Pullman's and the Pullman's team.'



Above: Long's J137 DUV, an 8.5m Plaxton Pointer Dennis Dart new to London United, is one of four acquired last year from 2 Travel Group. **BARRIE GILBERT**

Flights Hallmark buys Zak's

Rotala, the Alternative Investment Market-listed owner of Flights Hallmark, has acquired Great Barr, Birmingham-based Zak's Bus & Coach for £30,000. Zak's, which lost £4,000 in the last financial year, operates around 40 buses and 10 coaches. Although its operations will be integrated with Flights

Hallmark's West Midlands coach business, the contracted buses are being rebranded as CentralConnect, just as its southern England bus business trades as SurreyConnect. Zak's, which began trading in 1978, is named after founder Kevin Fazakerley, who died in 2003 aged 52.

The Brighton bus answer is now The Big Lemon

A former care home manager with no prior experience of running buses plans to compete against Go-Ahead's Brighton & Hove bus company by charging lower fares for short journeys.

Tom Druitt says around eight backers are prepared to invest in The Big Lemon, a community interest company that would run affordable services for local people. Profits would be split between passengers, staff and local shareholders, with agreed amounts set aside for investment, local charities and international efforts to combat climate change. The business would be carbon neutral, with an initial fleet of three buses fuelled by biodiesel.

'I'm not intending to fight Brighton & Hove buses with my company,' he says. 'I think it provides a good service if you live a long way from work or the shops. Coming from Newhaven on a Saver ticket is good value, but if you go from Norfolk Square to Palmeira Square, a 5min walk, it's £1.50. There needs to be an alternative.' Brighton & Hove managing director Roger French says: 'Competition is a good thing because it gives people a choice and keeps operators on their toes.'

Tom Druitt adds: 'Ultimately, I aim to provide a quality express service throughout Sussex to encourage more people out of their cars and reduce our impact on the environment.'

Westerns win again

For the second year running, Stagecoach West Scotland and Cornwall-based Western Greyhound have been named Bus Operators of the Year, the Stagecoach company winning the large fleet category, Western Greyhound that for small fleets.

Western Greyhound takes over Hambly's routes

Awarding winning Western Greyhound (see below) has expanded again, setting up a three-vehicle outstation in Looe and taking over two bus services from Hamblys Coaches, following proprietor Phil Hambly's retirement of on 28 October. Hamblys' bus drivers have transferred to Western Greyhound along with a Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario, but its Pelynt depot will be redeveloped and its four elderly coaches are being sold.

Hamblys' Looe-Polperro service 279 has become an hourly extension of Western Greyhound's 573 from Liskeard, with the Callington-Liskeard section of the 573 becoming a separate 574. Hamblys' once daily Looe-Plymouth 273 becomes new Western Greyhound 572 with three return trips on Mondays to Saturdays direct via the Tamar Bridge, undercutting First's year-

round four times daily 81A Torpoint Ferry route by 30min.

Western Greyhound also introduced later Saturday journeys on to its new service 510 (Newquay-Wadebridge-Launceston-Okehampton-Exeter) from 30 October, but Cornwall County Council subsidy cuts killed off all three return trips on weekday 536 (St Austell-Liskeard).

■ Stagecoach Devon has opened its first base in Cornwall by renting two spaces in Hookways Jennings' town centre garage in Bude. It has extended the first and last journeys on service 85 (Bridgerule/Holsworthy-Barnstaple) to Bude, taking the company into Cornwall all year. It also has a new four-vehicle outstation in Torrington where First Devon & Cornwall has pulled out and has secured a larger depot yard in Barnstaple.

Above: Hamblys' 710 VCV, a Volvo B10M with Plaxton Paramount 3500 body, operating the 273 service into Plymouth on 27 October, the day before the business closed. Alongside is Western Greyhound Mercedes-Benz Vario 518 (S18 RED). **CHRISTOPHER CARTER**



London starts race to produce hybrid double-deckers

Manufacturers have embarked on a race to provide London and other UK cities with hybrid diesel-electric buses – especially double-deckers – in time for the London Olympic Games in 2012.

London Mayor Ken Livingstone set the challenge by announcing that he wants the Olympic bus fleet to contain a high proportion of hybrid buses. As part of the move, a £25million climate change fund has been built into Transport for London's business plan for initiatives to reduce transport emissions farther than has already been achieved. 'Creating a low-

carbon bus fleet is an important part of our work to cut the emissions which are causing climate change. It is an important step towards my vision that London becomes one of the world's most sustainable cities,' he says.

TfL's transport commissioner, Peter Hendy, adds: 'With the announcement of our plans for hybrid buses in London, we are sending a clear message to London and the transport industry that we are serious about this. Transport for London will work with bus manufacturers and

operators to take this important step, and they need to start working with us now.'

By 7 November, opening day of the Euro Bus Expo show at the National Exhibition Centre, Wrightbus, Volvo, Alexander Dennis and Optare had all announced plans at various stages of development – to produce practical and affordable hybrid buses.

First into the field is Wrightbus, which has built a prototype double-decker based on its Pulsar Gemini-bodied VDL DB250 (*pictured*), with a Siemens electric drive system and a General Motors car-sized diesel engine similar to that in the six Electrocity midibuses already operating with Go-Ahead in London. The Pulsar HEV (for hybrid electric vehicle) is due to enter trial service with Arriva London on route 141 (London Bridge-Wood Green) around the end of November. Production versions will be based on a new VDL chassis being developed with Wrightbus, which in conventional diesel format will be powered by a Cummins ISBe4 engine, but in hybrid form will have a larger GM car diesel.

Volvo is to build six hybrid double-deckers based on its B9TL, also for operation by Arriva London, which are due in service in the early part of 2008. It has yet to announce who will body them.

Alexander Dennis claims that it will be the first in the market with a range of affordable two and three-axle hybrid single and double-deckers, which are being developed under the code name of Ecoturas, 'turas' being a Scots Gaelic word for journey. It has teamed up with Magnetic Systems Technology, a Sheffield-based company part-owned by Rolls-Royce, which already applies this technology in the military and earthmoving equipment markets. It will pair this technology with Cummins ISBe4 engines and has set itself a target of making the buses no more than 25% more expensive than diesels.

Optare is to offer Allison's hybrid transmission system – already fitted on around 500 United States transit buses – initially on its Tempo single-decker. However, it is still planning to re-enter the double-deck market and anticipates that it will do so with a hybrid option from the start, possibly in around two years' time.



Pulsar replaces Commander and Cadet

Wrightbus has finally retired its 'Classic' range of bodies after around 14 years, launching the 'Millennium'-style Pulsar body on the 11.9m VDL SB200 and the new six-cylinder Cummins ISBe4-engined 10.2m and 10.8m SB180, which replaces the four-cylinder SB120.

First example of the SB200 version, in Arriva livery, appeared at the NEC. The change also marks the end of the arrangement by which Volvo sold the Wright Cadet-bodied SB120 as the Merit midibus. That arrangement has lapsed with the move to Euro4 engines and, for now, Volvo has no midibus to sell.

However, one addition to Volvo's single-deck range is the Euro4-engined B7RLE with Plaxton's new Centro body. On this chassis, the offside emergency door on Plaxton and Wright bodies is in an unconventional centre position.

Wrightbus now plans to have a new generation Solar single-decker available by next summer, based on the Scania K-series.

Development was delayed while the bodybuilder developed a design that takes account of the high back-end of this new vertical-engined chassis.

A further, as yet unnamed, addition to the Wrightbus single-deck range will be a high-floor step entrance school-cum-rural bus for Ulsterbus. The 12m vehicle, similar in height to the Eclipse Commuter low-entry semi-coach, will be based on the straight-frame Volvo B7R chassis. It will have a dual entrance arrangement with a wheelchair lift directly ahead of the front axle, behind a narrow doorway for able-bodied passengers.

Ulsterbus has ordered 110 with 3+2 seating for 66 to expand its fleet and eliminate the need for children to stand or for three to occupy seats for two adults. Most are due to be delivered by September 2007 in time for the start of the autumn term.

Right: The Plaxton Centro-bodied Volvo B7RLE.



Above: The Wright Pulsar-bodied VDL SB200 for Arriva.





MAN goes Kinetic with East Lancs

MAN has adopted Kinetic as the model name for its new double and single-deckers bodied by East Lancs.

At the NEC, it showed a 4m high Kinetic+ double-decker on ND243 chassis, with nearside rear engine and 100% low-floor. This is the lowest double-decker currently available on the market and first impressions are of limited interior headroom, especially upstairs.

The prototype is to join the Reading Buses fleet around March, when current plans envisage it being painted green to supplement single-deckers on

its route 9. Production versions of the Kinetic+ will be available to a more full height with better interior headroom.

The two examples shown of the Esteem-derived Kinetic single-decker on low-entry 18.240 chassis – one of them for Stagecoach – had gasket glazing, whereas the double-decker, which resembles the Optare Spectra, was shown with bonded glazing.

MAN is also working with Wrightbus to produce a full low-floor single-decker, the first examples of which are now likely to be ready early next year.



New double-deck options

First production examples of the new Volvo B9TL body have been produced by East Lancs, Alexander Dennis and Wrightbus.

At the NEC, East Lancs showed its first Olympus body, a surprisingly traditional looking example for Delaine Buses of Bourne (pictured), with gasket glazing blending into the dramatic front end styling.

Wrightbus has updated its Eclipse Gemini body with curved rear end styling influenced by its StreetCar rapid transit bus. This

has a wider and brighter back window, as well as a new interior layout that reduces the overall length of the vehicle.

Wrightbus and Volvo each showed a 10.4m example of the new B9TL for First, part of a £46million order announced on the opening day for 253 of these and 42 Eclipse Urban-bodied B7RLE single-deckers, all with Euro4 SCR engines. Lothian Buses has also ordered fifty 11.4m Gemini B9TLs and five 12.2m Eclipse Urban B7RLEs to a new 12.2m length

with 2+1 seating towards the front. Alexander Dennis has produced an Enviro400-bodied B9TL for Arriva. The slightly larger Volvo engine compartment gives it a greater overall length than the Enviro400 with the bodybuilder's own chassis, but it has a similarly class-leading additional lower saloon seating capacity.



Jonckheere wins first UK order for new coach

Scottish tour operator Lochs & Glens has placed the first UK order for the new Jonckheere HV14 coach body.

Launched simply as the Jonckheere at last year's Busworld exhibition at Kortrijk on a VDL SB4000 chassis, the

HV14 is being sold in the UK on the 14m tri-axle Volvo B12B, of which Lochs & Glens has ordered six with 57 seats. These will offer additional legroom over that available on its recent deliveries of Jonckheere Mistral-bodied 13.75m B12Bs.



Versa could be vice for Optare to grip the Dart

Optare has sprung a surprise on the industry with its new Versa mid-range midibus — a stylish design with which it hopes to secure sales of 100 a year within two years in a 400-vehicle annual market dominated by the Dennis Dart. It unveiled an 11.02m prototype at Euro Bus Expo and announced initial orders for 25 vehicles from Stagecoach.

Pitched between Optare's Solo midibus and full-size Tempo, the 2.5m wide Versa shares chassis and body parts with both models. It will be available initially in 10.3m and 11.02m lengths with the potential for shorter and longer variants later. As a stainless steel integral bus with bonded glazing, it should be significantly lighter than its competitors, and with 36 seats at 10.3m and 40 at 11.02m, its seating capacity — with generous pitch between the seat rows — will also be the highest, millimetre for millimetre. Production begins in the second quarter of next year.

Put crudely, the Versa is a longer Solo with the entrance and driving position moved ahead of the front axle. The structure and most of the driveline aft of the front axle is the same as on the Solo, with the same choice of exhaust gas recirculation MAN D0804 and selective catalytic reduction six-cylinder Cummins ISBe4 or four-cylinder Mercedes-Benz OM904 engines, and Allison 2100-series transmission.

Although the front-end structure is unique to the new model, it has the Solo's Dana NDS41 front axle and ZF 8090 steering box, modified to achieve a 4tonne loading and 56deg steering lock. The tilt and reach steering column is from the Tempo. Optare is pioneering what it calls its SmoothRide suspension

package on the Versa, with additional capacity twin front and quadruple rear air bags to help achieve a better quality ride with reduced noise and vibration. It says hybrid and other alternative propulsion systems could be incorporated when these advanced drivelines become available and affordable.

Although most of the structure comes from the Solo, and there is a hint of Solo in the front end, it introduces a look very much of its own, with a wave-like roofline that disguises air conditioning pods when specified, as well as gently curved side windows. Optare sales director Chris Wise describes the look as 'classy stylish' and says it meets the challenge of those, like Go-Ahead Group marketing director Matthew Bradley, who want buses to become a visual part of the total retail experience rather than functional boxes on wheels. The manufacturer says the curved side windows are only fractionally more expensive than flat glass and although the window bays appear longer than on rival products, at 1,350mm they are the same length as on the Solo.

The swept-back front end with shaped quarterlights is designed to achieve a low drag coefficient. It narrows towards the front in the fashion of the Bova Europa coach of nearly 30 years ago, to minimise low-speed collision risk and to reduce the possibility of damage by current generation washing machines.

By producing a vehicle with a conventional front entrance layout, Optare has recognised there is a limit to what operators are able to do with the Solo. Although it has sold around 40 long wheelbase 9.9m and 10.2m Solo 37-seaters over the past two years, their



gargantuan wheelbase means that there are few routes other than park-&-ride contracts on which they can be used without risking extensive body damage.

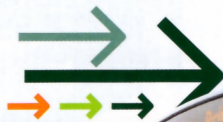
But having achieved nearly 3,000 UK and export sales with the Solo in nine years, Optare is confident that most Versa sales will be incremental, even if a few 10.2m buyers switch to the new model. It will offer the Versa in one, two and (for airports) three-door (offside and nearside) layouts, and will produce a left-hand-drive version as part of its five-year plan to win a significant

slice of the mainland European bus market.

The Versa has been designed from the inside out, with comfortable additional seating capacity a key objective. So is the low overall weight of 7tonne unladen within a 12tonne gross weight. By comparison, it says an unladen 11.3m East Lancs-bodied MAN 14.220 weighs 8,300kg and a Plaxton Centro-bodied VDL SB120 is 8,140kg. As a broad rule of thumb, it says operators should expect a 1mpg improvement in fuel consumption for every tonne saved.



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Midicoach range gets bigger

Optare has expanded its Spanish-built Solera midicoach range with the front entrance HD variant, offering 42 seats. At 3.45m, the body is 300mm higher and has some big coach styling features.

First launched in 1997 on the Mercedes-Benz 1120L chassis and revamped five years ago on the Mercedes Atego 1223L, the Solera — built along with all of Optare's coach range by Carrocerias Ferqui — until now has had an entrance behind the front axle. This additional model — the first is for Silcox of Pembroke Dock — is based on the Atego 1324L and meets a growing

requirement from operators doing more pick-up/drop-off work and carrying additional luggage. At 6.5cum, it has 1.5cum more boot space than the standard Solera, which in Euro4 form remains available on the Atego 1224L chassis. It has cantilever rather than hinged locker doors.

Also relaunched is the Ferqui-built Soroco minicoach on the Mercedes Sprinter. For Euro4, this is based on the Sprinter 515 CDI with restyled grille. It is 380mm longer than the previous standard model, with 300mm of the extra length in the wheelbase, allowing up to 19 rather than 16 seats on all



Above: Rollover protection pillars give the Solera HD a distinctly big coach appearance.

models. The hitherto optional 19-seat Soroco Plus is discontinued. For Euro4, the Vario-based Toro

28-seater will be built on the O816 chassis, with larger wing mirrors and a new Mercedes grille.

High-spec Tempo for Essex

The first of three high-specification Optare Tempos for Regal Busways of Chelmsford was shown at the NEC. The 12.6m Mercedes-engined 46-seat buses carry county council-sponsored Essex Pullman branding, which complements leather upholstered Esteban

seats with extra legroom in the offside low-floor area and tables with laptop sockets in a partially partitioned rear section.

Other features include air conditioning, overhead parcel racks and comprehensive on-bus real time information displays.



Above: Auto Holdings, which already sells BMC and Polish-built Autosan products in the UK has added Polish-based Jelcz to its range. A left-hand-drive example of the low-floor Libero midibus was at Euro Bus Expo. It has a Cummins ISBe4 engine and is likely to sell for under £100,000. It also plans to offer a full-size low-floor citybus, the MAN-engined Maestro.

Stagecoach opts for EGR Solos

Stagecoach is specifying MAN-engined Optare Solos for some of its first intake of low emission Euro4-engined buses.

A two-tone green 8.8m example for the Cambridge city centre service, shown on the manufacturer's stand, is part of a supplementary order that takes to 399 the number of Solos Stagecoach has bought since 2001. Until now, these have had Mercedes engines. But it has selected MAN as the exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) system

allows it to operate them from any of its depots without needing to install the AdBlue additive tanks required to service the Euro4 selective catalytic reduction (SCR) engines from Mercedes and Cummins.

Ironically, Alexander Dennis — part-owned privately by Stagecoach founders Brian Souter and Ann Gloag and a major supplier of the group's buses — currently only offers Cummins SCR engines to achieve Euro4 limits.

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January start for Cambridgeshire guided busway

Work on the £116.2million Cambridge-St Ives guided busway — the world's longest — starts in January, with completion scheduled for February 2009 at

the latest. A test section at Longstanton should open next summer.

Cambridgeshire County Council's contractor, Edmund

Nuttall, is establishing its main site offices and compound in Longstanton, on land that will become a 700-space park-&-ride site. Commercial bus services over the 25km disused railway will link new housing developments including Cambridgeshire's proposed new town, Northstowe, as well as existing villages and key employment centres such as Cambridge Science Park and Addenbrooke's Hospital, and also the Trumpington park-&-ride to the south of the city.

Council leader Keith Walters says: 'This is one of our most important projects. With tens of thousands of new homes being

built in the area, we are committed to providing the best possible public transport systems so people do not always need to use their cars. With construction about to start, I am pleased to have reached this important milestone.'

Edmund Nuttall — which also built the infrastructure for the Fastway guided bus service in Crawley — is establishing a special manufacturing plant to make the 15m long, 15tonne concrete beams for the busway. These will be made at the site, moved along the route on specially adapted vehicles and placed using a moveable gantry.



Left: Cambridgeshire council leader Keith Walters (left) and Edmund Nuttall chief executive Peter Brooks on the disused railway line that will become the guided busway.

Conductors and phased start for Leeds 'ftr'

First is to phase the introduction of its 'ftr' bus rapid transit service in Leeds, with two articulated Wright StreetCars operating on route 4 (Pudsey-Whinmoor) during November, and additional vehicles being added as they become available until a full service replaces double-deckers by April.

Following still unresolved difficulties with on-bus self-

service ticket machines on the 'ftr' service in York, First says 'customer service hosts' — conductors in other words — will be employed to 'ensure speedy boarding, check all tickets and passes, travel enquiries, reassure uncertain travellers and issue tickets where appropriate'.

'The technology is not yet quite ready to deal with the complexities of fares and passes

in Leeds where there is a multitude of daily and period tickets issued by ourselves, our competitors and the PTE,' says First UK Bus commercial director Leon Daniels. 'However, we are keen not to deny the travelling public all of the benefits that "ftr" can bring. This is especially true where the local authority has undertaken significant infrastructure improvements to

deliver faster and more consistent journey times and a consequently better total journey for passengers.

'As we move to new ticket technology, including on board and off-vehicle equipment, the hosts will help explain to passengers how they can purchase their tickets before travelling and validate them while on board.'

Big guns weigh into Peterborough battle

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire has joined the battle for supremacy on the Peterborough-Whittlesey route where two independents were already competing.

From 23 October, it extended its Citi3 service three times an hour from Park Farm to Whittlesey and is providing an hourly evening service. Until it closed down in October last

year, Morley's of Whittlesey's served the route with its 701 service. Alec Head Coaches provided a replacement, but pulled off in August, prompting Cavalier/Huntingdon & District and Judd's of Manea (owned by Emblings of Guyhirn) to launch their own competing services. Stagecoach served Whittlesey before, but turned its back on the town

when it scrapped its X7 (Peterborough-Cambridge) express. Now it believes that a regular frequency service using low-floor Darts will produce the levels of passenger growth that it has achieved across the rest of its Peterborough Citi network.

Commercial director Philip Norwell says: 'We have responded to requests from residents to run our buses from the town. The Citi network has seen considerable passenger growth since it was introduced in 2004, winning a prestigious award in 2005. I am confident that the Whittlesey route will add to this success.'



Left: Although branded for another service, Emblings/Judd's TIL 1178, a Plaxton Derwent II-bodied Leyland Tiger, was operating the 701 from Peterborough to Whittlesey on 23 September. It was previously in the Tillingbourne Bus fleet in Surrey. **RICHARD GODFREY**

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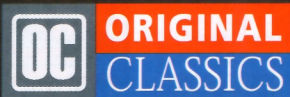
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MAN continues to pursue Scania

Scania rejected an improved £6.8billion takeover bid from German rival MAN in October, but an eventual deal still looked possible as MAN and German carmaker Volkswagen built up closer financial ties.

Volkswagen, which has ambitions of being a global bus and truck manufacturer, already had 34% of the voting shares in Swedish-owned Scania and bought a 15.06% holding in MAN in early October (*Buses* last month), making it the largest MAN shareholder. MAN, in turn, built up a 10% stake in Scania,

making it the third largest shareholder after Volkswagen and the biggest, the Swedish Wallenberg family's Investor Group.

MAN's initial offer for Scania would have bought out the Volkswagen holding, but although it now supports the German takeover, the carmaker rejected that part of the offer. It has since filed a request with the German cartel office to increase its stake in MAN to up to 30% in order to influence events and include its South American bus and truck operation in a merged group.

Through fares from Holmfirth

First has integrated bus and rail ticketing on the Holme Valley corridor in Huddersfield, with drivers issuing through tickets to Leeds, Dewsbury and Manchester on the group's Trans Pennine Express services. Bus services 309-316 have been rebranded as Holmfirth Connect and extended to Huddersfield railway station. Fares vary from

£4.40 for an off-peak day return to Dewsbury to £13 for a peak day return to Manchester. Seven-day season tickets are available for the cost of three returns in Yorkshire or four to Manchester. Ten Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympians carry branding and full rear advertisements for the service.

Picture by ANDREW JAROSZ



DIARY DATES

28 November

Omnibus Society. Jonathan Bray, PTE Group assistant director on bus re-regulation. 18.45, London Underground headquarters, 55 Broadway, London, SW1 (St James's Park station).

2 December

Omnibus Society (Scottish branch). Talk by Alex Shearer, First Glasgow operations director. 18.00, Woodside Halls, Glenfarg Street, Glasgow (near St George's Cross Subway station, served by First Overground routes 20, 40, 61).

9 December

Omnibus Society (North West & Yorkshire branch). John Banks on United in North Yorkshire and Cleveland. 14.00, Bradford Central Library.

15 December

Buses Worldwide. Richard Stedall and Steve Guess on the BMW 2006 tour of Morocco. 18.30, The Small Chapel, Kings Cross Methodist Church, Crestfield Street, London, WC1 (opposite Kings Cross Station front).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gardner diesel engine remanufacturing has ended, with closure of Paul Gardner Engineering, which has remanufactured over 3,500 engines since 1988.

Nottingham Express Transit may be extended after 2010.

The government has approved initial design work on tramlines to Chilwell/Beeston and Clifton.

Fife Council has awarded a new contract to Alloa-based

Marshall Construction to complete rebuilding Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, St Andrews and Leven bus stations by February. Work was suspended after previous contractor Dew Pitchmastic collapsed.

Creative Master Northcord is to release a 1:76-scale casting of the new Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart next year.

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Winter is coming and it is time to catch up

- **London Bus Magazine** (no. 137) includes a major article entitled *The Red Rover* - a story of three 9 year olds in search of Cs and Ts in April 1959, and *London's Bus Garages* (part 2), as well as the usual *Around & About* quarterly review and book reviews. Gloriously illustrated, 60 pages, only £5.00 (£4.00 to members).



- **London Buses in 2005** - A review of the routes, vehicles, operators, significant events as well as the politics of the year that make up the story that was 2005. Topics included are the end of main-stream Routemaster operation, the Heritage routes, the terrorist atrocities, special operations and noteworthy liveries; 60 pages gloriously illustrated in colour - £7.00 (£6.00 to members).

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Giles Fearnley to be next OS president

Giles Fearnley, chief executive and co-founder of the Transdev-owned Blazefield Group, will be next year's Omnibus Society president. He will deliver his presidential address on the future of the bus industry in London on 30 January and will host a presidential weekend event, based in Bingley, on 31 August to 3 September.



Cyril McIntyre retires from Bus Éireann

One of the best-known experts on the Irish bus industry, Bus Éireann fleet planning and control manager **Cyril McIntyre**, has retired after 45 years in the transport business. He officially leaves his post in December, but began pre-retirement

leave at the end of October.

For many years, he was a press officer with Bus Éireann and, before that, with Coras Iompair Éireann, where his honest approach to passing on information, his Irish charm, hospitality and keen sense of humour endeared him to generations of bus industry journalists. His own enthusiasm for the industry also guaranteed that he was a face almost bound to be spotted among the crowds at British bus and coach exhibitions and events like Showbus. His enthusiasm was handed down from his father, who was a driver with the Irish Omnibus Company, later a bus inspector with the Great Southern Railways and CIÉ.

Besides his day job, and as a particular fan of Leyland products, Cyril has long been involved in bus preservation and enthusiast writing. Two years ago, he wrote the copiously illustrated *CIÉ Buses 1945-1987* for Midland Publishing, and as early as 1968 he was joint author — writing under the Irish version of his name, C. B. Mac an tSaor — of *Dublin Buses*, an authoritative account of bus operations in the Irish capital that remains a definitive source of reference today in the *Buses* editorial office. 'I look forward now to having more time to catch up on my research into the history of the pioneering Irish bus companies and hopefully to publish some of the results of this research in due course,' he says.

'I have enjoyed my 45 years in the transport business and I value especially the great sense of comradeship and camaraderie, which has always characterised relationships in our industry,' he adds. 'Such a sense of common purpose has brought together both professionals and enthusiasts in areas of common interest, and still survives the vagaries of deregulation, privatisation, re-regulation and, indeed, sometimes the confusion and chaos through which we have all worked at one time or another.'

Colin Curtis becomes the president of Cobham



Above: Colin Curtis with FRM1, the rear-engined Routemaster that marked the end of LT's own vehicle design ambitions. GAVIN BOOTH

Former London Transport vehicle engineering manager **Colin Curtis OBE** has been made honorary president of The London Bus Preservation Trust, which owns the Cobham Bus Museum.

Now a consultant, he worked for LT for over 40 years, starting in 1947 and mainly at its Chiswick Bus Works. He is best known to enthusiasts as a member of the team that developed the Routemaster, but he was also responsible for work on all of LT's postwar vehicles such as the RT and RF as well as

maintaining off-the-peg types bought from the mid-1960s onwards. He also was a keen supporter of the plan — never executed — to build a new XRM bus in the 1980s and in more recent years has tried to interest operators and manufacturers in his QRM project for a modern side-engined double-decker with 1950s engineering features.

He has written several books about London buses, Chiswick Works and his time with LT. He owns former private hire and Green Line coach RF19.

Andrew Jarvis joins Stagecoach South

Former Blue Bus, Bolton commercial manager **Andrew Jarvis** has returned to the south of England as operations director with Stagecoach South, in day-to-day charge of traffic matters at the division's seven depots in Chichester, Portsmouth, Winchester, Basingstoke, Andover, Aldershot and Worthing.

He started his career 16 years ago as a booking clerk in the summer holidays for a coach operator and gained his PCV licence when he was 18. He joined the Go-Ahead Group at Brighton & Hove in 1996 as a graduate trainee, becoming a garage staff manager. Following time as a business development manager for Go-Ahead in Newcastle, he became a district manager at Wilts & Dorset before joining his family's Blue Bus company in 2002. Following its sale to Arriva North West last year, he became an area manager with that company.

Meanwhile, Stagecoach management trainee **David Lee-Kong** (23) has become assistant operations manager at Worthing, his first post after two years with the bus operator. He began his training at Stagecoach West after studying transport management at Swansea University, then went on a 10 month secondment to the Scottish Executive as a project assistant for the national concessionary travel scheme.

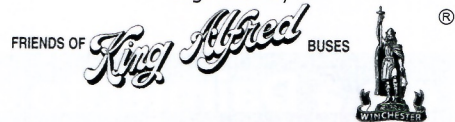
New manager for W&D, Salisbury

Jim Bell has succeeded the late **Chris Gordon** as Salisbury depot manager with Wilts & Dorset. He started his career in Salisbury as a conductor 33 years ago, then worked for British Rail and a coach company before returning as assistant manager for three years. Last year, he was promoted to operations manager.



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Douglas Alexander's three bus options

Will the government continue with an unfettered free-for-all, treat bus services like dustbin contracts or opt for something in between?

As reported last month, transport secretary Douglas Alexander announced at the Labour Party conference that he intends to unveil plans before the end of the year to make it easier for PTEs and local authorities to influence or control bus services. Like many others, I am extremely curious to know what he will come up with. Perhaps we'll know by the time this issue of *Buses* appears. If his plans mean significant changes, it's pretty certain he'll upset the bus operators. If they don't, the PTEs (and some local authorities) will be disappointed, and will no doubt make their disappointment known through the press and by the resumption of heavy lobbying.

I think there is a sensible way forward, which I'll come to later, but I don't think it will satisfy the PTEs, who basically want complete control as in London. They're wary of saying this, because of the huge bill in London, but that's what it amounts to.

It seems to me that there are only three real options for organising bus services (excluding the pre-1986 system, which still applies for now in Northern Ireland: I don't think anyone on the mainland would want to return to it). The first option is to let the bus operators get on with it, with additional services purchased by local government if it wants them, which is what we have had since 1986 in Great Britain except for London.

The second option is to contract routes out to selected operators, as in London. This is little different to a dustbin contract: you can, and Transport for London has done so, play around with incentive regimes and revenue risk to your heart's content, but basically the ball, kit and park all belong to TfL and that's the end of it. The original version of railway franchising purported at least to be

something of a halfway house between my options one and two, but it was always much closer to option two, and in its current form is firmly of option two type, albeit still with (at least some of) the revenue risk that TfL's London bus model long ago abandoned.

The third way

The third option, as I see it, is for the key parties — and here I only really mean the bus operators and relevant local government body — to enter into contracts that lay clear obligations on both. This would mean that the bus operator's freedom to control services would be balanced by obligations to meet local aspirations in some shape or form — no doubt mostly on services, fares and reliability. The deliverability of these obligations would at the same time be counterbalanced by obligations on the local government body to provide the wherewithal — mostly road space — needed by the operator. So, at least in theory, you would have the basis of an equal partnership. This is, of course, what everyone has been striving for over the past 20 years, at least when not stubbornly fighting their own corners.

This, too, is what all the complex paraphernalia of government legislation, instructions and advice has sought to do. Unfortunately, it assumes that the relevant parties act sensibly, develop common objectives and build trust.

In a few places, this has happened consistently; in others, it happens sometimes or for a while; while in still others it barely seems to happen at all. The result is that each party takes early refuge in the supposed interests of its stakeholders or shareholders, although you'd think that their longer-term interests would be met best by the parties working more closely together.

I very much favour this third option. I do not believe option one will ever work completely effectively because local government is inherently interventionist and anti-business (or anyway anti-public transport business), at least in the PTE areas where most of the pressure for change is coming. I am completely opposed to option two because I believe that it will squander large quantities of taxpayers' money and will throw away many of the gains that have been made in the past 20 years, but will still give no guarantee that buses will get the practical support they need.

No doubt central government would have to incentivise or legislate to bring about my third option — it shouldn't be like this, but that's the way things seem to have to happen in this country. I've set out previously in this column what I think is needed, which is a system of commercial contracts within the present so-called 'deregulated' environment. Each party would have clear, quantified obligations, with money changing hands as a result of success or failure in meeting those obligations.

Bus operators would guarantee to deliver an agreed service package, which might include all or any of service coverage, frequency, fares and vehicle standards (and probably other things). In exchange, local authorities would guarantee road space allowing specified service speeds to be achieved, provide decent bus stopping and passenger waiting facilities, and so on.

Uncertainties in an imperfect world

The world isn't perfect, so the contract would have to have plenty of provisos to allow for external factors outside the parties' control. The key uncertainty, of course, is revenue, and careful thought would be needed to balance revenue risk sensibly between the two parties.

But it's been done for the railways, which are much more susceptible to economy-driven revenue variations, so it should be achievable. There is no point in making agreements that neither party has any realistic prospect of achieving — as the Department for Transport and the GNER train company have recently found out.

I wonder how close all this will be to Douglas Alexander's final plan. Not very, I fear, and his plan will probably be very bureaucratic in nature. But we can always live in hope...

Left: Brian Cox's third option would balance local authorities' expectations with commercial freedoms such as that exercised by Arriva Midlands to relaunch its Leicester area services. Two Optare Spectra-bodied DAF DB250s new to Stevensons of Uttoxeter, including 4698 (49 XBF), carry City Linx branding as part of this initiative. **RICHARD SHARMAN**





Veolia grows fast in Europe and United States

Veolia, the French group with 16,700 buses, 3,500 trains and 72,000 employees in 25 countries including the UK, has expanded its Scandinavian operations and moved into Serbia, as well as becoming a major player in the United States airport minibuss shuttle market.

In Norway, it has acquired 170-vehicle Nordtrafikk Buss, which has 296 employees and runs regional and express buses in the Hålogaland and Salten area in Nordland, the Harstad area in

Troms and Trøndelag. The deal also includes Nordtrafikk Maritim, which employs 46 staff and operates three express ferries. On 1 November, Connex Sverige — Veolia's Swedish subsidiary — acquired 45-vehicle Granbergs Buss and its wholly owned travel agency, Resesäljarna Älvsbyn. Granbergs Buss has 50 employees and operates regional bus services in Norbotten and Västerbotten, in the north of Sweden, as well charter coaches.

The first move into Serbia has been achieved by Veolia Transport Central Europe, which has acquired 164-bus operator Litas, based in Pozarevac, 60km south-east of the capital, Belgrade. This is Veolia Transport's first step into Serbia, and gives it 650 employees in this part of the former Yugoslavia.

In a deal announced on 24 October, Veolia Transportation North America has acquired SuperShuttle, which runs 1,200 minibuses on demand responsive

services at 23 United States airports. Veolia Transport executive vice-president Olivier Brousse says: 'SuperShuttle's shared ride concept is probably the missing link between mass transit systems and individual cars.'

'We are very excited to have the opportunity to continue to develop it in the United States and to bring it to the many cities we serve around the world, particularly at a time when it is critical to reduce oil consumption and global warming.'

Transdev buys its first German bus fleet

French transport giant Transdev — which operates buses in London, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Bournemouth and part-owns Nottingham City Transport — has moved into the German bus market by acquiring SZ-Verkehrsgruppe, a 250-vehicle stage carriage and schoolbus operator with five depots in the central states of Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia. It has a workforce of 340 staff.

Transdev says it intends 'to combine the long-standing experience and know-how of the two companies' and will leave the SZ-Group structure unchanged. Germany's state monopoly

commission has approved the takeover.

Transdev — which operates 100 public transport networks in over 70 cities worldwide and employs around 28,000 people — already runs passenger trains in Germany, including a stake in Trans Regio, which serves Rhineland-Palatinate, and it recently won the right to operate rail services between Cologne, Koblenz and Mainz.

'The SZ Group is a very attractive company in an optimal location,' says Transdev chief executive officer François-Xavier Perin. 'Together with the rail activities of Trans Regio, it will provide an excellent platform for expansion in Germany.'

Swiss gain more ground in France

PostAuto, the Swiss postal bus undertaking, has added two more French towns to its portfolio of foreign operations. Through its Car Postal France SARL subsidiary, PostAuto has begun running urban services in Haguenau and Schweighouse in the Moder Valley near Strasbourg.

The network has been rebranded as Ritmo, an acronym of Réseau Intercommunal de Transport de la Moder. It operates four routes with a small fleet of secondhand vehicles, including two Renault Agoras, a Heuliez GX317 and a Mercedes-

Benz Citaro. Several on-demand minibuss services are also offered.

The deal is the latest in a series of successful French tenders for Car Postal, which won the right to operate in Dôle in the Franche-Compte region in January 2004 before expanding into Obernai (Alsace) in August 2005. From 2006, the company has been providing 30 buses on seven routes in Bourg-en-Bresse, north-east of Lyon. Car Postal is also active in Lons-le-Saunier in the Jura region, where it offers management and technical support but runs no vehicles.

World Cup to boost South African bus sales

MAN South Africa expects bus sales to increase by 55% before the 2010 World Cup football finals, says managing director Geoff du Plessis.

Its bus division currently sells 1,100 units a year, but expects this to rise to 1,700 and although demand will slow post-2010, he does not foresee a slump. 'There is a lack of transport capacity in

South Africa, and the extra vehicles brought into the market for the World Cup will help to create the required capacity...a lot of the international spectators will return to their respective countries and act as ambassadors for South African tourism, which will attract more tourists in the years after the World Cup.'



Right: The Serbian capital city of Belgrade has acquired several Russian-built Uritsky ZIU9 trolleybuses from Athens, where they were replaced with new low-floor trolleys for the 2004 Olympic Games. They are operating in their former owner's purple and yellow livery. Also operating in Belgrade in September was an unidentified low-floor trolleybus (lower right). **STEVE KELLY**

LA bus rapid transit three times ahead of plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority of Los Angeles says the Californian city's Orange Line bus rapid transit (BRT) service is carrying three times the number of passengers its planners expected.

NABI articulated buses on the 14-mile segregated busway — MTA calls it a 'train on rubber tyres' — parallel the congested 101 freeway and link the communities of North Hollywood, Valley Village, Valley Glen, Van Nuys, Tarzana, Winnetka and Woodland Hills directly to the Metro Red Line subway to downtown Los Angeles.

In the 12 months since it opened on 29 October last year, Metro estimates the Orange Line has carried over 6million passengers. Ridership has risen most months, with an average of 21,000 average weekday boardings recorded in September, nearly three times what agency planners expected when the line opened. Average Saturday and Sunday boardings in September both reached new records of 13,413 and 10,887

respectively. Independent research suggests that traffic is flowing faster on the 101 freeway since the busway opened.

'In our wildest dreams, none of us would have predicted triple the ridership we originally projected in the first year,' says Los Angeles county supervisor and Metro board member Zev Yaroslavsky. 'At a cost of only \$330million (£173million), a build time of just over two years and high ridership, the Orange Line is one of the most cost-effective transport projects in the history of Metro, and arguably, the country.' Metro plans to extend the line, open new stations and develop areas around the stations into 'vibrant places to work, live and play'.

Picture: MARTIN ISLES



Bridge tolls fund night buses

San Francisco's Metropolitan Transportation Commission is funding the continued operation of two night bus services with tolls revenue collected from motorists using seven bridges. The two connecting services, operated by AC Transit, operate from 01.00 until early morning Bay Area Rapid Transit trains start running. In a ballot two years ago, voters agreed to a \$1 (52p) tolls increase to fund a regional traffic relief plan.

Neoplan fights 'copycat' Chinese Starliner

Neoplan has accused Zonda, China's third largest vehicle manufacturer, of making and selling a copy of its flagship Starliner coach and has filed a lawsuit against the busmaker in a Beijing court.

The A9, produced in the eastern Jiangsu province (in one of five Zonda factories producing up to 15,000 vehicles a year) 'entirely copies the original industrial design' of the Starliner, says MAN vice-president Franz Neundlinger. 'This

is an absolutely clear-cut case' MAN-owned Neoplan is demanding that Zonda halts production of the allegedly pirated version and pays damages. Other MAN buses are manufactured under licence in China, but not the Starliner whose design has been registered with Chinese patent authorities.

Zonda insists its design is original, citing major differences between the two vehicles. 'The A9 was developed ourselves,'

company spokesman Ji Lijun told the *China Daily* newspaper. 'We have a strong independent development capacity.' He says the coach had won several awards in China. Neoplan decided to sue after close examination of a Zonda A9 acquired from an intermediary. It says Zonda has produced 'several hundred' of the 'copycat' coach, which costs around a third of the Starliner.

Photographs of the A9 on the Zonda website show a vehicle with

a strong resemblance to the current Starliner, launched in Germany in September 2004. Both have a striking rearward-sloping upper windscreen. 'It's a very well-executed copy,' MAN executive Bengt Hamsten told Germany's *Die Welt* daily. The European Chamber of Commerce in China and other business organisations are backing MAN's case. They regard it as an important test of Beijing's commitment to protecting intellectual property rights.

KMB tests Euro4 Volvo



Above: The prototype Euro4 B9TL in service with KMB. ANDREW GORDON

Volvo's first tri-axle Euro4-engined B9TL has entered trial service with Kowloon Motor Bus in Hong Kong. It has an Australian-built Volgren body and is numbered ATEU1.

Volvo also fits the French-built D9B Euro4 engine in its newly

announced 7500 side-engined full low-floor articulated single-decker, the first four of which are going to Göteborgs Spårvägar, the transport undertaking in the Swedish city of Gothenburg, which already has double articulated versions of the 7500.

HK trolleybus dewired?

The Hong Kong Citybus trolleybus project appears to have been abandoned. The overhead at Ocean Park has been dismantled and the converted Dennis Dragon is parked at Chai Wan depot, apparently shorn of its trolleybus booms.



Quality Line wins first double-deck contracts

The announcement of tendered service awards in October brought more surprises than most. Although covering only three mainstream routes in south-west London, all change hands next June. A further major change, announced on 2 November, will see former Routemaster route 7/N7 change hands.

Transdev loses the 406 and 418 (Kingston-Epsom by different routes) to Quality Line (Epsom Buses), one of London's few remaining smaller bus operators. Its highest profile route until now has been the 293 (Epsom Hospital-Morden), worked by rigid Mercedes-Benz Citaros rather than the Optare Solos and Dennis Darts on its other routes. The 406 and 418 will

gain new double-deckers — the first for Quality Line — the peak requirement remaining at four for each route. Transdev operates the 406 with Dennis Tridents, the 418 with Darts.

The other change sees the 465 (Fulwell-Dorking) move from Travel London to Arriva Southern Counties' Warnham (Horsham) garage, 10 miles south of Dorking, with five new single-deckers. Travel London works it from Fulwell garage, where the route starts.

Presumably, lower overheads at Warnham helped achieve a keener bid.

Transdev retains the remaining four routes, all one-bus schooldays contracts, using existing buses. They are the 613

(Worcester Park-Sutton Common), 665 (Surbiton-New Malden), 671 (Ham-Chessington South) and 681 (Hounslow-Teddington); the 665 is single-deck, the others double-deck. The contracts officially take effect next July but probably start in September.

Metroline will take over the 7 (Russell Square-East Acton) and N7, which extends out to Northolt, from First CentreWest in June with a peak requirement for 22 new double-deckers. Metroline will also operate new schoolday service 606D with a new double-decker, while Transdev wins the new 696 with an existing double-decker, both from January.

Polish Scania bring a new look in the capital

Entry into service of Transdev's first Polish-built Scania OmniCity double-deckers adds another new style of bus to London. The black mouldings around their front blind box and upper-deck windscreens help them stand out among other types, though they are otherwise all red without a grey skirt.

Internally, they are bright and cheerful, if not slightly clinical, with white glossy ceilings and, most unusually, white window frames. The numerous grab rails are a pale colour, best described as duck egg blue or green, a contrast to the usual strident yellow. Closed circuit television displays images of the interior of the bus and of traffic outside, though one TV installation appeared to cast everything in a mauve reminiscent of a First interior.

So bright and glossy are the ceilings that at first glance there appear to be two 'bus stopping' signs in different languages, but the second is just a strong reflection. Performance seems brisk where opportunity exists, though the rear suspension of one bus I rode on emitted strange sounds on sharp corners. If there is a downside, it is that there are only eight seats in the low-floor area, in a total lower deck capacity of 23. That compares poorly with Metrobus's East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDeckas, and with the class-leading Alexander Dennis Enviro400.



Above: Transdev OmniCity double-decker SP7 (YN56 FCJ) operating route 148 on 16 October. **STEPHEN WHITELEY**

The world may get its Oyster, but when will Stoke?

A few years ago, 80p cash fares on any London bus enticed many people away from trips previously made by rail. More recently, free travel for under-18s has enticed schoolchildren off trains. But that is unlikely to happen from 2 January, when the cash fare rises from £1.50 to £2. Those using Oyster pay-as-you-go cards will continue to pay £1.

Transport for London says that the £2 fare, like the new £4 fare on central London tubes, will encourage wider use of OysterCards. Little more than a year ago, the plan — since dropped — was that cash would not be accepted on buses from September 2006, roadside ticket machines being provided at most bus stops. Those making several bus journeys in one day will be better off with an OysterCard, which is capped at £3, or £3.50 by buying a one-day Bus Pass. A weekly bus

pass, incidentally, will cost £14. One piece of good news is that, from September, TfL scrapped the £3 deposit previously required for an Oyster seven-day Bus Pass.

The cash fare rise could deter visitors from using public transport in London. While VisitBritain is piloting the sale of OysterCards through its on-line shops to visitors from India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain, Portugal and the USA, and perhaps later to 30 other countries, that won't help if you pop down to London from, say, Stoke-on-Trent for a weekend. And what percentage of foreign tourists contacts VisitBritain before deciding on a holiday here?

The price of a one-day off-peak bus/tram/rail/Underground Travelcard rises on 2 January from £5.40 to £5.70 (£5.20 for OysterCard users). As part of an agreement

to introduce Oyster pay-as-you-go ticketing across the London surface rail network over the next few years, train operators go over to charging zonal fares that day, with — for example — a £1.80 single fare within one zone, £2.10 in two.

Meanwhile, Costa Coffee has launched 'an Oyster-style pre-pay card' to cut waiting time at its coffee bars. Customers will be able to load their cards with up to £75 over the internet or at the cafes and swipe them every time they buy coffee. What a pity that use of the actual OysterCard has not been extended for this. Its Hong Kong equivalent can be used for such purchases, and for buying newspapers or groceries, which encourages its general use. Hong Kong bus companies benefit financially from such card use, so London is missing an opportunity.



Above and below: Two routes on the edge of Greater London have been relaunched with commercial and local authority sponsorship. Travel London is using what are reputed to be the last four Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts built — including DP1 (LJ56 ONH) — on the 441 (Englefield Green-Heathrow Airport) in partnership with Surrey County Council and airport operator BAA. The buses have full air conditioning and the service has extra journeys to attract shift workers at the airport. DaimlerChrysler has helped fund the extension of Arriva Guildford & West Surrey route 436 (Guildford-Byfleet) to the Mercedes-Benz World complex at Brooklands and on to Weybridge station, as well as an increase in frequency, appropriately using three new Mercedes Citaros in a special blue and silver livery, including 3903 (BX56 VTW). **RICHARD GODFREY/MARK LYONS**



SHORT HOPS

A four-day joint policing operation on buses and trains in Lambeth and Croydon resulted in 73 arrests for various offences. In addition, 165 penalty fares and 33 notices of prosecution were issued for ticket irregularities when Transport for London revenue protection officers checked 122 buses and 6,103 passengers.

The central London congestion charge extends to Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea on 19 February.

Peters Door Systems has won a contract to review the operation and condition of 232 doors on First London buses that are at least five years old, refurbishing mechanisms as necessary.

Nearly 120,000 14 to 17-year-olds have not applied for the photo card needed for free bus travel.



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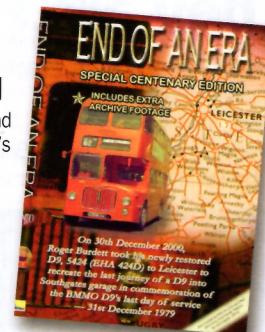
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Whatever happened to...? ...the Optare double-decker

Optare's project to build a revolutionary flat-floor, side-engined double-decker seems to have been in the offing for as long as the Second Coming. It was first announced in 2000, when the Leeds-based bus builder became part of the Hungarian NABI group, and we're still waiting for it.

As we reported a year ago, the NABI episode put the mockers on the plan as the Hungarians ran short of money for this and other product development plans. But independent once again, Optare was ready last autumn to reactivate the double-decker and

said that a prototype might be at Euro Bus Expo in November.

The fact that its new Versa midibus was at the NEC and the double-decker wasn't tells us that the wait continues. Demand for new double-deckers has slackened from the boom generated when London was boosting bus services ahead of congestion charging and then was replacing Routemasters, so Optare's immediate prospects are better served by selling more single-deckers. The double-decker's next opportunity might be when London prepares for the 2012 Olympic Games.

Pigs may not fly, but caught the bus

My late mother used to relate a formative experience from her youth when, on holiday in 1945, she took what seemed like an endless bus journey from Stornoway to the Atlantic coast of Lewis. The apparent eternity of the ride owed much, I believe, to frequent stops made while thirsty Lewismen nipped behind hedges for impromptu consumptions of alcohol.

It seems she got off lightly, for Loring M. Lawrence, editor of *Bus Industry* magazine in the United States, has mailed me a cutting from the 24 June 1948 edition of the *News-Herald* of

Hutchinson, Kansas with another insight into past ways of Hebridean bus travel.

While scanning microfilms of old Hutchinson newspapers, his eyes alighted upon an Associated Press report from 'Lewis, Outer Hebrides', which read: *'The buses on this rustic isle in future are to be reserved exclusively for human passengers — no more pigs. The traffic commissioners granted four new licences for trucks to transport livestock after some mainland strangers complained about sharing seats with friendly, but smelly, porkers.'*

20 YEARS AGO

Just as in this issue, December 1986 *Buses* carried reports of bus exhibits at the National Exhibition Centre. While the industry now has its own show, it made do 20 years ago with a section of the cars-to-trucks Motor Show set against the uncertain background of a newly deregulated operating business in the throes of privatisation.

'While the double-deck market is decidedly sick at present,' Stephen Morris commented, 'it is thankfully not quite dead, although one might have thought so by a quick analysis of what was on display at the show.' That was because the only double-deck bus in Hall 8 was a Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean for Kuwait, ensuring a 32-year unbroken run of Motor Show appearances for a chassis no longer available at home.

On the other hand, it also produced what would turn out to be the last new product from Metro-Cammell Weymann — the Metroliner midibus. MCW had kept a media lid on this project while it was in development, but secured orders for 125 before the show.

This purpose-designed vehicle marked another stage in the

maturing of the small bus market. Or as Stephen put it, 'Now that minibus schemes are underway in many centres, certain areas of dissatisfaction with the existing machines are beginning to emerge.'

Comparing it with the Volkswagen LT55-based Optare CityPacer, he wrote: 'It does not look quite so stunningly different, but its overall shape and style certainly owe something to the Leeds product.' Three years later, as the Optare MetroRider, it became a Leeds product.

MCW also exhibited the first of only three Metroliner 400GT double-deck coaches built. This tri-axle model was 4m high rather than the 4.2m of the original Metroliner double-decker, was full integral rather than having a separate chassis and had an in-line Gardner 6LYT rather than transverse Cummins L10.

The Metroliner has always been an attractively styled vehicle,' we wrote, 'though its confinement to express routes so far had probably endued it with an air of utility. The 400GT has markedly different styling...which ought to broaden its appeal among independents, and is decidedly in the Germanic vein...'

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They are Routemasters, however you look at them

They may have gone into semi-retirement, but London's Routemasters continue to represent the quintessential British double-deck bus in advertisements.



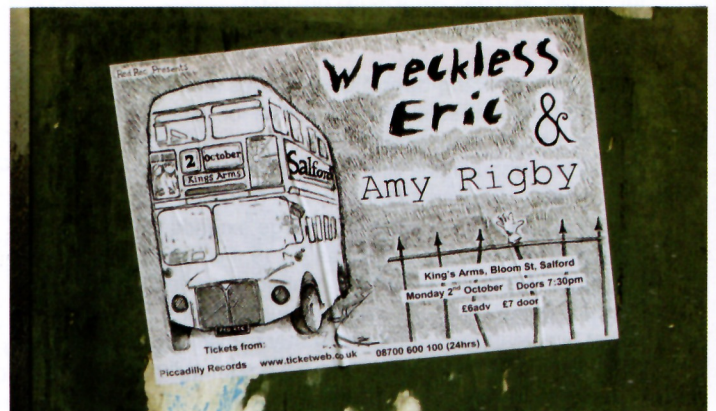
When Mrs M and I flew back into Heathrow in October, one of the first advertisements greeting us in the passageways of Terminal One at six in the morning was of guardsmen climbing aboard an RML on the 159. And as many of you have been writing to tell me, Marks & Spencer has paired two icons in the shapes of Twiggy and the RM for its autumn campaign.

Only it couldn't leave the RM as is, and has inserted wrong-way-round examples (with right-way-round destination displays) into High Street windows the length and breadth of Blighty. My thanks to Mark Ellis for this particular picture taken in Norwich and to Len Rason for suggesting the reversed layout might account for

the former Lesley Hornby's bemused smile.

Not that RMs are confined to legit advertising. Howard Wilde spotted the Wreckless Eric & Amy Rigby flyposters in downtown

Manchester, complete with not bad representation of a refurbished RM. The side elevation might not match the standard of the artist's efforts on the front, but it's all the right way round.



A long way from Polamdie

Guy Halford-MacLeod, who contacts me regularly from Washington, DC with postage stamps depicting buses, has surpassed himself with this issue from the Commonwealth of Dominica.

'Are those really Glasgow Corporation colours I spy there?' he asks. 'And if so, why? Maybe they just liked green and orange.' More to the point, I wonder what led to such a vehicle depicting a philatelic 1955 Caribbean bus ride, for the left-hand-drive bus from which someone not dissimilar to our dear Queen is alighting is indeed a Glasgow bus. Not only that, but one of 10

East Lancs-bodied BUT trolleybuses supplied to Scotland's largest city in 1953 and withdrawn in 1964.

The stamp depicts one, complete with authentic green destination blinds, as they operated latterly with green roof and window surrounds and with the original rear entrance door removed. The dark lozenges above the side windows are glazing for standees. All that's missing is the overhead. You might think that maybe these buses were exported and converted into Caribbean motorbuses, but no, all 10 went to west of Scotland breakers in 1965.



PROPERTY BARGAIN OF THE MONTH

Looking for a little pad in the country with regular buses passing the front door? Phil Sposito spotted this 'village centre cottage' for sale a few miles east of Cheltenham. The aspect may be more open at the front than you're used to, but he says the rail by the roadside could come in handy to hitch up your horse when the oil runs out.

He wins this month's Corgi Original Omnibus Company diecast model for sending me an offbeat bus picture. Keep your eyes open and camera ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the **Leven address**. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

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20010	Leyland PD2/12 - Greater Manchester Transport	£14.99
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17218	Leyland National MK1 - Eastern National	£14.49
29612	Leyland Olympian - Arriva Yorkshire	£14.99
288090L	Leyland Titan - Blackburn Transport	£14.99
28904	GM Atlantean - Fylde Borough	£14.99
24324	BET Weymann - Fishwick and Sons	£14.99
28813	Bristol RELP Coach - Grosvenor NBC NEW CASTING	£17.99
22202	Leyland Titan - Stagecoach East London	£15.50
2881458	Leyland Titan - Stagecoach East London SHOWBUS SPECIAL	£17.50
26704	Plaxton Paramount 3500 - National Express Rapide	£14.99
32301	Bristol RELP Coach - Royal Blue NEW CASTING	£17.99
25710	Daimler DMS - LONDON BUSES FOREST DIST.	£17.50
17505	Leyland National MK11 - FIRST PROVINCIAL	£17.50
27619	Wright Volvo Renown - GO AHEAD NORTHERN	£17.50
14013	Bristol FLF Lodekka - NORTHERN SCOTISH	£17.50
20635	Plaxton Pointer Dart - STAGECOACH EAST LONDON	£17.50
26618	Plaxton Paramount 3500 - ULTERBUS TOURS	£17.50
30604	AEC Renown - NORTHERN NBC	£18.50

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31501	RM ROUTEMASTER - LONDON TRANSPORT	£18.99
31601	RM ROUTEMASTER PROTOTYPE - LONDON TRANSPORT	£18.99
31901	RML ROUTEMASTER - LONDON TRANSPORT	£18.99
32001	RCL ROUTEMASTER COACH - GREENLINE	£18.99
31902	RML ROUTEMASTER - ARRIVA LAST DAY SERVICE	£18.99
31701	RMC ROUTEMASTER COACH - GREENLINE	£18.99
31801	RMA AIRPORT ROUTEMASTER - LONDON TRANSPORT	£18.99
32101	RMF FRONT ENTRANCE - LONDON TRANSPORT	£18.99

1:24 SCALE DAIMLER BUSES

99102	Daimler DMS 1:24 - London Buses - Northern Routes	£155.00
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UK2014	Dennis Trident Plaxton President - Arriva Liverpool	£19.99
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UK2026	Dennis Dart MPD - First Hampshire & Dorset	JAN £15.99
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UK4009	Volvo Olympian/Royale - First Pennine	JAN £15.99
UK4010	Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale - South Gloucestershire Bus & Coach	£19.99
UK4011	Volvo Olympian/Royale - Lathian Buses	DEC £19.99
UK5004	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Arriva Manchester	£19.99
UK5007	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Oxford Bus Company	£19.99
UK5008	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Plymouth Citybus	£19.99
UK5009	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Solent BlueLine 'Blueveer'	NOV £19.99
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UK5011	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Wills and Dorset	JAN £19.99
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UK5107	Mercedes Charo Rigid - Arriva London	£23.00
UK5108	Mercedes Charo Artic - Stagecoach in London UEL Orange	DEC £23.00
UK6001	Dennis Enviro 400/Alexander - Stagecoach in London	£23.00
UK6002	Dennis Enviro 400/Alexander - Metrolink	£23.00
UK6003	Dennis Enviro 400 - London General	DEC £23.00
UK7002	Scania Omnicheck - Metrolink Fostway	£20.99
UK7003	Scania Omnicheck - Manxline Aviation	£20.99
UK7004	Scania Omnicheck - First Hampshire & Dorset	OCT £20.99
HK2008	Leyland Olympian/Alexander RX - Hampshire Bus	£20.99

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ES242	Scania Omnichecker - Uni-link Southampton	£26.50
GL45	Guy Arab - Wolverhampton Corp	£26.50
N6215	Scania Metrolink - London Transport (route 12)	£26.50
L004	Leyland Titan PD2 - Southdown Beagle Route 119	£26.50
	Leaves. Limited 816 pieces	£26.50
AE-02	AEC Regent 111 Park Royal - 'Ipswich Corporation'	£26.50
AS1006	LS Guy Arab V - China Motor Bus (Red Livery)	£22.50
AS1007	LS Guy Arab V - China Motor Bus (Blue Livery)	£22.50
AS1008	Guy Arab Tow Truck - China Motor Bus (Red Livery)	£20.99
N6109A	Scania Metrolink - ALEC HEAD (Livery A)	£26.50
N6109B	Scania Metrolink - ALEC HEAD (Livery B)	£26.50
R812	Scania Alexander R - 'Scania Cleaner Quieter Bus'	£26.50
R813	Scania Alexander R - Yorkshire Rider - 'Leeds'	£26.50
ME-01	AEC MERLIN LONDON TRANSPORT (Red Arrow route 500)	£22.49
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ES242	Scania Omnichecker - Uni-link Southampton	£26.50
GL45	Guy Arab - Wolverhampton Corp	£26.50
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CORGI
NEW RELEASES (1:50th SCALE)



CC25908 AEC Routemaster London Transport - Sight & Sounds (Jan) £24.99 £59.99

ORIGINAL OMNIBUS
ORIGINAL OMNIBUS
NEW 2007 RELEASES



DM45908	Van Hool T9 & Cold Cast - Mayes of Budde	Nov (£59.99) £47.99
DM45909	Van Hool T9 - Shearings	Nov (£24.99) £19.99
DM46004	Wright Eclipse Urban - Fastrack/Went Thameside	Jan £20.99
DM47217	Wright Eclipse Gemini - The Witch Way	Feb £20.99
DM47517	East Lancs Millennium - Cumbria CC	Mar £20.99
DM44113	Optare Solo - Cardiff Bay Express	Mar £20.99
DM46005	Wright Eclipse Urban - Arriva Shires & Essex	Apr £20.99
DM46006	Wright Eclipse Urban - First Glasgow	Jun £20.99
DM45119	MCW Metrobus MkII SD - Dublin Bus	Aug £20.99
DM46007	Wright Eclipse Urban - Rosendale	£20.99
	Transport 50th Anniversary	Sep £20.99
DM47218	Wright Eclipse Gemini - Arriva Midlands	Nov £20.99
DM49901	Plaxton Centenary Set NEW!	Apr £83.99

CLASSIC BUS

DM41407	Roe Trolleybus - Derby Corporation	Feb £20.99
DM44012	Blackpool Brush Railcoach - Tigerific	Apr £23.00
DM40817	Bristol Lodekka FS - Western SM	May £20.99
DM41408	AEC Regent V/Roe - Samuel Ledgard	Jul £20.99
DM41704	RTW - Stevensons of Uttoxeter	Aug £20.99
DM45711	AEC Q Double Deck - Birmingham Corporation	Oct £20.99
DM41112	Leyland PD3/12 - East Lancs - Burnley, Colne & Nelson	Oct £20.99
DM41409	Guy Arab IV/Roe - Sunderland Corporation	Dec £20.99
DM49902	John Fildwick & Sons Centenary Set	May £20.99

BEST IMPRESSIONS

DM42518	East Lancs Millennium - London United	Sept £20.99
DM46008	Wright Solar - Reading Transport	Nov £20.99
DM44710	Dart SLF/Pointer 1 - Trent Barton 'the village'	Dec £20.99

MODERN COACH

DM45910	Van Hool T9 - Bartons Transport	Jan £20.99
DM46101	Plaxton Paragon - Felix Coaches NEW!	Feb £20.99
DM46102	Plaxton Panther - National Express NEW!	Jun £20.99
DM45911	Van Hool T9 - Bibby's of Ingleton	Jul £20.99
DM46103	Plaxton Paragon - First Eastern Counties NEW!	Aug £20.99
DM46201	Scania Lirax PB - National Express NEW!	Sep £20.99
DM45311	Bova Futura - Ellen Smith (Tours) Ltd	Oct £20.99
DM46104	Plaxton Panther - Edox Reisen NEW!	Nov £20.99
DM46202	Scania Lirax PB - National Express (Irish Bus) NEW!	Dec £20.99

LONDON BUS

DM41703	RTW - London Transport	Jan £20.99
DM45118	MCW Metrobus MK1 DD - London Transport	Mar £20.99
DM44709	Dart SLF/Pointer 2 - Arriva London	May £20.99
DM41010	AEC Q Single Deck Bus - London Transport	Jun £20.99
	(Civil Defence Mobile Gas Unit)	£20.99

BUSES IN BRITAIN (1:50th SCALE) NEW CASTINGS

CC26101	RT Double Deck Bus - London Transport NEW!	May £41.50
CC26102	RTL Double Deck Bus - London Transport NEW!	Jun £41.50
CC26104	RTL Double Deck Bus - Samuel Ledgard NEW!	Oct £41.50
CC26103	RTL Double Deck Bus S&S NEW! S&S	Aug £63.00

METTOY

MT00103	Routemaster Bus - London Transport	Mar £63.00
MT00106	Routemaster Bus - Green Routemaster	Jul £63.00
MT00107	Routemaster Bus - Sightseeing Tour	Oct £63.00

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Swift answer to south coast services

DAVID JUKES finds out why a largely unloved late-model Leyland suits Emsworth & District right down to the ground

Many unusual buses have served the predominantly rural area between Havant and Chichester since deregulation 20 years ago.

Emsworth-based Hants & Sussex ran former London Transport AEC Merlins and Swifts for many years until the operations were sold to Southampton Citybus, which replaced the AECs with its own East Lancs-rebodied single-deck Leyland Atlanteans that remained until First closed the operation. Sussex Bus operated Willowbrook Warrior-rebodied Leyland Leopards and a 3+2-seated Leyland National Urban Bus from Stagecoach's Chichester garage, and — after Stagecoach took over — they remained until replaced by cascaded Leyland National 2s.

The current operator is Emsworth & District Motor Services, which celebrates its 30th birthday next year and is owned and managed by Paul and Marion Lea with their daughter Caren. Its buses provide many of the services around Havant, Rowlands Castle, Westbourne, Emsworth, Southbourne and Chichester from a main operating base in Southbourne, a West Sussex village midway

between Portsmouth and Chichester, and an open-air yard at West Leigh, near Havant. It employs 24 full and part-time staff.

It continues the tradition of operating unusual vehicles, having five active Leyland Swift midibuses — possibly the largest fleet of this never common type in current use — and two more in store. It also has an ex-London Transport AEC Swift, AML 30H, the oldest bus owned. It is being restored in the company's workshop after a long period in storage, Paul Lea's aspiration being that it gains a Class VI MoT certificate for occasional service use on a semi-preserved basis.

Poor man's Darts

The five active Leyland Swifts all carry Reeve Burgess Harrier bodywork and include two new to Hyndburn. The low cost Swift, with mid-mounted Cummins B-series engine, was the last passenger chassis introduced by Leyland Bus before the Volvo takeover and was based on the Leyland Roadrunner truck. Its underfloor engine and high chassis frame hindered passenger access, and it was eclipsed by the similarly sized Dennis Dart, which

also offered the B-series and Allison automatic transmission, but in a lower-floored chassis with a rear engine.

Paul Lea operates Darts as well as Swifts and describes the little Leylands as 'the poor man's Dart'. They were cheaper to purchase



Right: Restoration work proceeding on 36-year-old AEC Swift AML 30H, which Emsworth & District hopes to return to occasional service.

Left & inset: Reeve Burgess Harrier-bodied Leyland Swift operating alongside Stagecoach buses in West Street, Chichester. Inset shows the three-step entrance and fourth step beyond the cab on similar G767 GDU. Pictures by DAVID JUKES

secondhand and have proved ideal for the company's operations. 'They are Swift by name and swift by nature,' he says. 'They have a better fuel economy than the Dart and possess the manoeuvrability of a Triumph Herald.' His Darts include one of the few Duple Dartline-style bodies built by Marshall before it introduced its own version of the body.

Of the two stored Swifts, bus A12 YOU — new to a Scottish operator — is too good to break up for spares and might well enter service. It had been sold with other examples to a Cayman Islands operator and was fitted with air conditioning before departure. It remained inactive for several years on a Cayman quayside owing to Customs & Excise difficulties before repatriation. It clocked up a low mileage after just five years' service use. A solitary Wadham Stringer-bodied Swift was purchased with just 48,000 miles on the clock following use since new as East Sussex County Council's spare vehicle. It has a rear-mounted wheelchair lift but will require new seats and a full refurbishment if it is to return to service.

There aren't yet any low-floor buses. Paul Lea says he worried initially about their being damaged on rural roads and by urban speed humps, but he concedes that he may buy some in future as large operators run out of step-entrance buses to sell.

Although mixed, there is logic behind Emsworth & District's choice of vehicles. Bedford, the traditional choice of independents, has been largely replaced by Van Hool integral coaches and by Leyland and Dennis buses. Two of the

Right: The Dennis Darts include two Alexander Dash-bodied 40-seaters acquired from Stagecoach, both of which are branded for service 27. In May, J504 GCD was using the temporary Market Parade terminus in Havant while the bus station was rebuilt.

EMSWORTH & DISTRICT BUS SERVICES (October 2006)

11	Thorney Island - Emsworth - Westbourne-Fishbourne - Chichester	Monday to Saturday (majority of service under contract to West Sussex County Council)
27	Rowlands Castle - Havant - Emsworth or Southbourne	Monday to Saturday (majority of service under contract to Hampshire County Council)
31A	Hayling Island (Mill Rythe) - Havant-Bosham - Chichester High School	Schooldays
31B	Denvilles - Westbourne - Southbourne - Fishbourne - Chichester High School	Schooldays
31C	Chichester High School - Fishbourne - Southbourne - Westbourne - Havant	Weekdays
36	Southbourne - Emsworth - Havant Asda - Havant	Weekdays
44A	Bosham - Nutbourne - Bourne Community College	Schooldays
44B	Thorney Island - Emsworth - Bourne Community College	Schooldays
121	West Leigh - Rowlands Castle - Funtington - Bourne Community College - Westbourne - Rowlands Castle - Compton School	Schooldays
147	Rowlands Castle - Westbourne - Funtington - Chichester Bishop Luffa School	Schooldays
300	Denmead - Waterlooville - Emsworth - Chichester (for Chichester Market)	Wednesday only
605	Emsworth-Leigh Park-St Thomas More's School	A*
611	Spencersfield-Emsworth Primary School	A*
629	Hayling Island (Beachlands)-Mill Rythe Schools	A*
634	Hayling Island (Northney)-Mill Rythe Schools	A*
636	Denmead-Milton Road-Horndean School	A*
638	Hayling Island (Beachlands)-Sandy Point-Mengham Schools	A*
639	Clanfield-Hazleton Way-Cowplain-Waterlooville-Havant College	Schooldays (under private agreement with Havant College)
Broadmarsh Shuttle	Havant Railway Station-Havant Bus Station-Longstone Technology Park-Brookside Road-Penner Road (Broadmarsh Business Area)	Free weekday service (under contract to Havant Borough Council). Operates at peak periods and lunchtime for duration of roadworks at junction of A27 and Harts Farm Way.

A* - Schooldays (under contract to Hampshire County Council)

remaining Plaxton-bodied Bedford YMTs are less usual — a Bustler-bodied bus and a possibly unique Supreme with a wheelchair lift.

It started with a Bedford SB3

Emsworth & District started out operating private hires with a solitary petrol-engined Bedford SB3 with

Plaxton Embassy body. 'The Emsworth & District name was chosen as sounding old and established,' says Paul Lea. 'We chose a livery based on the traditional Southdown colours that had disappeared beneath National Bus Company green but were still fondly remembered locally.' School

contracts were undertaken from 1978, that first year on a temporary basis. Additional coaches of typical independent fare were acquired to meet an increasing workload: Duple and Plaxton-bodied Bedfords and Fords and a former Western National Bristol LH that suffered frozen air lines every winter.



Bus services started at deregulation with the operation of route 121. This was the first of what would become a distinctive Emsworth & District trait — commercially registered school bus services where sufficient demand existed. Routes serving Chichester High School and Bourne Community College, the latter near the Southbourne base, were soon added. The High School routes initially required two double-deckers and a single-decker to meet demand; with pupil numbers declining, three single-deckers now suffice.

This was followed by the award of a West Sussex County Council contract to operate route 11 between Emsworth and Thorney Island from 28 February 1987, after Hants & Sussex terminated its route 11 from Westbourne at Emsworth. Operation of the Thorney route has subsequently expanded with West Sussex assistance and now terminates in Chichester.

All-year UK and European excursions and tours have increased in parallel with the growth in bus services, and private coach hire continues to thrive. 'Three of the current coach fleet are fitted with lifts and are specially adapted to carry wheelchairs,' explains Caren Lea. 'They are proving popular in an expanding part of our business. Occasionally, a whole coach has been used for wheelchairs or the lift used to assist the less agile to reach their seats.'

More recent contract hire has seen rail replacement work undertaken as a sub-contractor to London General, part of the Go-Ahead Group, whose Southern Railway subsidiary operates rail services between Portsmouth, Brighton and London Victoria via Southbourne.

Relations with Stagecoach

But how are relations with Stagecoach South East, operator of the low-floor 700 service and other routes from Havant and Chichester? 'We enjoy a good relationship with Stagecoach, which has been very supportive to Emsworth & District,' says Paul Lea. 'We were assisted in our early days of service bus operation by

EMSWORTH AND DISTRICT FLEETLIST (October 2006)				
REGISTRATION	CHASSIS	BODYWORK	DATE NEW	NOTES
AML 30H	AEC Swift 4MP2R	Marshall B46F	1970	Ex-London Transport SM30; Loughton High School, Essex; Seymour, Harlow; Hants & Sussex, Emsworth
MLK 708L	Ford Transit	Strachans B16F	1972	Awaiting restoration. Ex-London Transport FS8
JGV 332N	Bedford YRT	Plaxton Derwent B64F	1975	Awaiting Restoration. Ex-Squirrel, Hitcham
OUC 45R	Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR	MCW H44/32F	1976	Ex-London Transport DMS2045 (as H44/24D) Hants & Dorset 1907; Wilts & Dorset 1907.
TND 409X	DAF MB200DKTL600	Plaxton Supreme V C51FL	1982	Ex-Jackson, Altrincham
NYH 161Y	Bedford YNT	Plaxton Supreme V Express C45FL	1982	
TJI 8792	Van Hool T815 Acron	Van Hool C49Fi	1983	
A829 SUL	Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR	Leyland H44/26D	1983	Ex-London Buses (Selkent) T829
A883 SUL	Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR	Leyland H44/32F	1983	Ex-London Buses (Selkent) T883 (as H44/26D)
UOI 2679	Van Hool T815 Acron	Van Hool C49Fi	1984	
A405 BHL	Van Hool T815 Alicron	Van Hool C51Fi	1984	
A889 FPM	Bedford YMT	Plaxton Bustler B55F	1984	Ex-Tillingbourne Bus, Cranleigh
B29 BMC	Ford Transit	Chassis Development M12	1985	
B999 CUS	Bedford YMQS	Plaxton Paramount II 3200 C35F	1985	
D602 RGT	Bedford YMT	Plaxton Derwent II B53F	1987	Ex-Epsom Coaches; Metrobus, Orpington
E459 ANC	Mercedes-Benz 609D	Made to Measure C24F	1988	
F306 FWB	Mercedes-Benz 811D	Optare StarRider B31F	1988	Ex-Yorkshire Traction 306; Road Car 366; Stagecoach Lincolnshire 41339
G505 XLO	Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RA	Reeve Burgess Harrier B41F	1989	Ex-London Borough of Hillingdon 3635
G727 RGA	Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RA	Reeve Burgess Harrier B39F	1989	Ex-McKenna, Uddingston; Kelvin Central Buses 1091
A12 YOU	Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RA	Reeve Burgess Harrier C37F	1990	Partially stripped for spares
G767 CDU	Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RA	Reeve Burgess Harrier B39F	1990	
G39 TGW	Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3003	Carlyle Dartline B32F	1990	Ex-London Buses DT39
H36/7 YCW	Leyland Swift ST2R44C97A4	Reeve Burgess Harrier B39F	1990	Ex-Hyndburn 36/7 (36 is overall advertisement for Manchester House Blinds, Emsworth, 37 is lettered for Broadmarsh Shuttle)
H226 EDX	Optare MetroRider MR01	Optare B33F	1990	Ex-Ipswich Buses 226
H421 GPM	Mercedes-Benz 709D	Dormobile Routemaker B27F	1990	
H536 CTR	Leyland Swift ST2R44C97A4	Wadham Stringer Vanguard B26FL	1990	Ex-East Sussex County Council. Stored
H201 DVM	Van Hool T815 Alicron	Van Hool C53F	1991	Ex-Shearings 201
H204 DVM	Van Hool T815 Alicron	Van Hool C49FL	1991	Ex-Shearings 204; Chambers, Bures
J504/39 GCD	Dennis Dart 9.8SDL	Alexander Dash B40F	1992	Ex-Stagecoach South 504/39; 32504/ 39 Branded for route 27
L452 UEB	Dennis Dart 9.8SDL	Marshall B40F	1994	Ex-Myall, Bassingbourn Branded for route 27
M3 KFC	MAN 11.190	Berkhof C32F	1994	Ex-The King's Ferry, Gillingham 3.1
C8 LEA (R749 ECT)	Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D	Optare Nouvelle 2 C29F	1998	In special livery for Emsworth & District silver jubilee 1977 to 2002. Ex-Goodyear, Barnsley

Bob Jackson, before Stagecoach appointed him Chichester depot manager. He currently holds the same position at Worthing. 'It is a relationship built on mutual respect of our different strengths and abilities. Both companies have assisted each other when unfortunate to suffer a breakdown on common route sections to

prevent passengers being stranded.

'We both operated the park-&-ride service at Portsmouth's Trafalgar Fleet Review when Stagecoach found itself without a vehicle for a 700 journey to Brighton. We had a Titan running empty to Southbourne so instead, with a minimum of fuss, we wound 700 on to the blinds and ran on hire to

Stagecoach as far as Chichester where its replacement vehicle took over.' The relationship clearly works in another way for eight of the current fleet — two Titans, three Swifts, two Darts and the StarRider — were acquired from Stagecoach.

The company also acts as a buffer between Stagecoach and First's interests in south-east Hampshire.

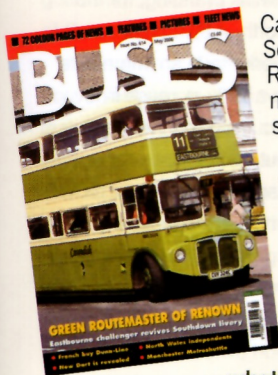
Collectors' Limited Edition Model No. 2 Southdown Liveried, Cavendish RML Routemaster, RML2324

NEW TOOLING



Prototype model illustrated. Actual version may vary slightly in detail. Colour will vary on production model.

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Cavendish Coaches operate services in East Sussex with a fleet of Southdown liveried buses. Earlier this year they added a classic RML Routemaster to their stable. RML2324, Registration number CUV 324C can be seen operating the number 10 and 11 services in the area.

Ian Allan Publishing have teamed up with Exclusive First Editions to produce a superb scale model of RML2324. Production has been strictly limited to just 1500 examples.

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Above: A view through the windscreen of an Optare Solo on the 115 service, from Port Eynon to Llangennith, as it waits at Cilbion to connect with Wright Cadet-bodied VDL SB120 YJ04 BVA on the approaching Swansea-Rhossili service. **Pictures by RHODRI CLARK**

Gower Explorer — a lesson for all?

RHODRI CLARK reports on — and tries out — a council-funded rural bus network in South Wales that has opened up new connections, attracted many more passengers and has just won a national award

The debate about regulation of buses is driven mainly by the frustration of urban local government, which believes it has too little control over service frequency and fares. But that situation does not apply in those rural areas where all bus services are tendered. Arguably, councils in such areas have been slow to realise the potential for creating bus networks that are attractive to residents and visitors alike.

The Gower peninsula was a typical example for most of the 20 years after deregulation in October 1986. The local authorities funded services on the two main routes across the peninsula. The southern route, Swansea-Rhossili, was commercial as far as Upper Killay and continued to Rhossili roughly two-hourly. The northern route,

Swansea-Llanrhidian, was commercial as far as Gowerton and ran roughly two-hourly to Llangennith.

Two years ago, the City and County of Swansea (Swansea's unitary council) radically changed the Gower bus services, building on improvements made four years earlier. All tendered services on the peninsula were let in one contract, won by Pullman Coaches of Penclawdd. The council bought new vehicles and commissioned a distinctive Gower Explorer branding from Best Impressions. Service frequency was hourly on the main routes. A new service was introduced, connecting the north and south routes and serving various villages. The result was that nearly every

Gower settlement had a bus at least every two hours during the day.

The Welsh Assembly Government provided a £1.4million grant to cover six new buses — four 39-seat Wright Cadet-bodied VDL SB120s and two Optare SlimLine Solos — plus improved bus stops and marketing. The grant also funded better

services, including four new vehicles with new Lliwlink branding, for the rural area north of Swansea.

The network made an immediate impact, with a 21% increase in passenger journeys on the main southern route in the first year and a 24% increase on the northern route. Ridership on Sunday buses on



Above: Passengers transfer at the roadside interchange at Scurlage. Cadet YJ04 BVC is on a Swansea-Rhossili working. The Solo in the background offers a connection to Horton and Port Eynon, having come from Llangennith and Llanrhidian. Both vehicles display identical destinations, reflecting the guaranteed connection.

Right: The use of SlimLine Solos like YJ54 ZXT on some services does not preclude Gower Explorer from carrying surfers with surfboards. These happy surfers are leaving the 115 at Llangennith.

Gower increased by 44%. Growth continued this year. Passenger numbers were up 13% on south Gower in the year to August 2006, compared with the year to August 2005, and 11% up on north Gower.

Revenue support, from the council's own funds, is no higher for Gower Explorer than for the previous tendered services, despite the greatly improved frequency. Increased revenue, plus savings from using council-owned vehicles, covered the extra operating cost.

All-seasons timetable is the bedrock

Gower Explorer's bedrock is its timetable, which knits the services into a genuine network and caters for most permutations of journeys on the peninsula. All main settlements have commuter services to Swansea arriving at around 08.30, with return services departing around 17.45.

Connecting buses wait for each other, enabling transfers between vehicles. The service between the north and south coasts has sufficient leeway for connections to be guaranteed, even when services out of Swansea run late.

A measure of the rarity of such convenient connections was the inability of the Traveline online journey planner to cope with them. The software was designed to disregard connections with margins of less than 5min, which gave prospective Gower Explorer passengers the impression they would have to wait two hours for connecting buses. The situation was rectified for 2006, after much discussion with Traveline managers.

Although the eastern ends of both main routes always operated commercially, Swansea Council decided the Gower Explorer contract would cover services into the city centre. These were timed to run after commercial services, to minimise revenue abstraction.

Variations to the basic service pattern provide school transport and additional through services to Swansea. The Rhossili service, 118, follows two alternative routes through south/mid Gower, via Parkmill or Cilbion. One of the Solos operates a

complementary service, 117, to maintain an hourly frequency on the Parkmill route by connecting with the 118 at Killay.

The 117 also serves the popular beach at Oxwich.

The timetable is designed for all seasons. Publicity and information are simpler if the same times apply throughout the year. In the colder months, the frequent services support the local tourism industry's efforts to encourage off-peak visitors. Gower has a thriving surfing scene, and the best waves often roll in from the Atlantic after the summer.

The downside of the year-round pattern is that the main routes drop to roughly two-hourly on Sundays and bank holidays, in summer as well as winter. Likewise, the Beacons Bus leisure network for the Brecon Beacons operates only on summer Sundays and bank holidays. There are at least some additional evening services on Sundays and bank holidays from Easter to late-September. Further improvements would require extra funding.

Included in Gower Explorer publicity is First Cymru route 14, a commercial service between Swansea, Bishopston and Pennard. This does not use a vehicle in Gower Explorer livery, and if First Cymru wanted to apply the livery, it would be impractical or confusing because service 14 does not have a self-contained diagram. On Sundays and bank holidays, Pullman Coaches operates the equivalent tendered service, 114, sometimes with a Gower Explorer vehicle. Pullman also operates early morning and evening services under council contract.

Vigorous marketing has been vital

No matter how good the timetable and vehicles for the new network, they would have achieved little were it not for the vigorous marketing that supports Gower Explorer. The buses' livery turns heads in Swansea,



marking out Gower Explorer from local city buses.

Swansea Council engaged specialist consultancy Transport for Leisure to create a five-year marketing campaign. There were two main aims — to provide ample information to visitors and to encourage Swansea residents to try the bus outside the main summer season. The main challenge was to make a complicated network look easy to use. A 'Welcome to Gower Explorer' leaflet includes a map with colour-coded bus routes and details of attractions served. Visitors can also pick up a summary timetable designed for their use. Tailored timetables are posted at all stops served by Gower Explorer. Anyone visiting the tourist information centre at Swansea's Quadrant bus station last summer could not have failed to see a stand dedicated to Gower buses just inside the doorway.

One effective publicity tool is a series of pocket booklets showing times from each of seven key villages. These are distributed to

local tourist attractions, information centres, caravan parks and other places. The idea is to overcome timetable phobia by providing a page listing departure times to each of 10 destinations, including Swansea city centre.

The booklets may also have helped Gower Explorer generate more travel by local residents. This was a challenge in an affluent rural area — home to many of Swansea's professionals — where car ownership is high. There is anecdotal evidence that the buses have become something of a social club on wheels for pensioners, who have qualified for free travel in Wales since 2002. Morning peak buses from Llanrhidian are well used for commuting into Swansea, with few spare seats after Gowerton.

A day out on Gower Explorer

There is no substitute, however, for putting these claims to the test and going out and riding by Gower Explorer. As I soon realised, finding information from afar can be a

Below: The services provide interconnecting links on the Gower Peninsula west of Swansea.
Copyright GEOGRAPHERS' A-Z MAP COMPANY



challenge, as Gower Explorer.co.uk is the website of a boat charter company and not the bus service.

In mid-August, the height of the holiday season, the council's website said: 'Additional information providing detail of timetables and routes can be found by accessing the external link in the right hand column.' That's council-speak for 'Click on the right for details.' The link didn't work. Fortunately, another Google search took me to the full timetables.

There's no seamless transfer from trains to Gower Explorer at Swansea. My itinerary had to allow time to travel the mile between the rail and bus stations, but this gave me the opportunity to view major roadworks to accommodate First Cymru's 'ftr' rapid transit buses. Two other options were to use Gowerton, where I ended my Gower Explorer trip, as this now has a greatly improved rail service, but the rail station and bus stops may be difficult to find. The other is to transfer at Cardiff, where train and bus stations adjoin, to First Cymru's Shuttle to Swansea Quadrant. Is it too much to hope that a combined Shuttle and Gower Explorer ticket will be available, to fill contra-peak Shuttle seats and entice more Cardiffians to visit Gower by bus?

The incoming Gower Explorer 118 arrived at Quadrant bus station 1min before its booked departure at 11.10, and was late departing. The destination blind read 'Rhossili and Port Eynon', although Port Eynon would be reached by a connecting bus. This is a good example of marketing and information over-riding bus industry tradition.

The Cadet was clean and eye-catching. However, the branding was incomplete on the nearside, presumably because panels had been replaced. The same was true of a sister vehicle I used later that day. I was surprised to see the Arriva logo inside the vehicle, for the Yorkshire dealership that sold the bus to the council. At £3.50, the Gower Day Explorer ticket was good value, as it needs to be for the buses to tempt people out of cars.

There were about 26 passengers on board as the bus left central Swansea. Most of the pensioners

alighted in the suburbs. I assumed the bus would gradually empty thereafter, but a group of eight walkers joined at Parkmill. On one narrow and twisting section of the main road, an oncoming Volkswagen camper van was enough to exacerbate the delay as the bus edged past. Would the 115 connection I required from Scurlage to Horton be held? It was. As we reached Scurlage, the driver instructed passengers clearly where the two vehicles would be going. Nobody boarded the 118 from the 115, although this connection offers a route to popular Rhossili beach from north Gower villages.

At upper Horton a dozen people, three families with children, boarded the 115, although they could have waited until the bus was on its way back from lower Horton. They had probably come from a caravan park nearby, in which case they had almost certainly chosen the bus instead of their cars.

I left the 115 at lower Horton for a coastal stroll and lunch at a pub in Port Eynon. The delay to the bus had knocked 13min off my time at the seaside, but there were two hours before the next 115 was due to leave Port Eynon. The 115 was 13min late again, because of connections rather than shortage of recovery time. A handful of passengers left the 115 at Scurlage for the 118 to Swansea, which was already waiting. That left four passengers on the bus, including two surfers who had joined near Scurlage and stowed their surfboards diagonally across the Solo's luggage hold.

Driver encourages photography

Watching the scenery rather than the timetable, I assumed we needed to make up time and was surprised when the driver stopped the bus on Gower's central ridge. Clearly proud of his local area, he insisted I should take a photo of the view. He assured me he would only have to wait farther down the road for a bus out of Swansea, where a carnival was scheduled.

Sure enough, at Cilibion there was plenty of time to watch semi-wild ponies or stretch our legs as we waited for the 118 service from Swansea to Rhossili. Using his mobile phone, our driver informed the driver of service 116, waiting for our bus a mile farther west at Llanrhidian, that there were no passengers to connect into the 116 for Swansea. The 116 therefore left without further delay. The risk that someone wanting the connection would board our bus before we reached Llanrhidian was tiny because the road passes through open country.

The 118 from Swansea was 16min late at Cilibion. No passengers wished to connect, and the 115 was free to go. It picked up two resident pensioners in Llanrhidian, one bound for Llangennith, the other for Burry Green. The surfers alighted at Llangennith, reached after a detour to Llanmadoc. The delay had shrunk to 5min by the time I left the 115 at Llanrhidian at 15.44 to connect with the 15.41 departure from Llanrhidian to Swansea (service 116). The 116 was empty but others boarded as

Pullman Coaches

Capturing the Gower Explorer contract was a coup for Pullman Coaches, then an independent David to the Goliath of First Cymru. Since April, it has been part of the expanding French-owned Veolia Transport empire. Besides Gower Explorer, it operates two of Swansea's three park-&-ride contracts and other tendered work.

The council's decision to supply the vehicles — to reduce the overall cost — may have been significant. Where the operator is required to source new vehicles, the big groups have advantages in tendering because of their buying power. Where the contracting authority supplies the vehicles, small companies stand as good a chance as big ones.

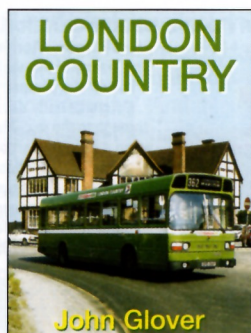
we progressed. At Penclawdd, a circular detour up a hill proved useful to a mother and daughter who had boarded at the bottom with bags of groceries from the local shop. At Gowerton I had over 20min to track down the railway station before my eastbound train arrived, on time.

In October, the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport presented Swansea Council with its annual excellence in passenger transport award for the successful introduction of Gower Explorer. Its citation for the award, sponsored by FirstGroup, says that the council has 'radically improved public transport in the area' and that passenger feedback has been 'very positive'.



Right: Optare SlimLine Solo YJ54 ZXT at the Port Eynon surf shop.

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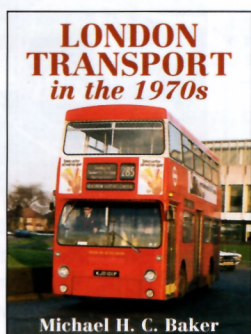


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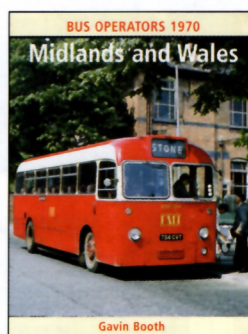


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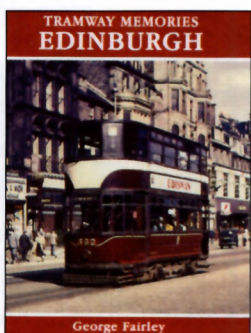


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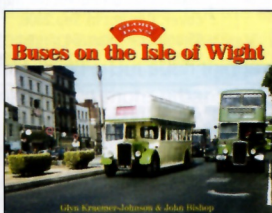


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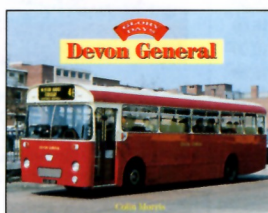


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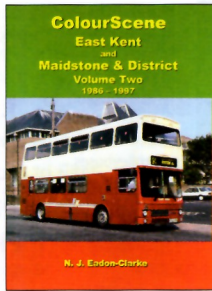
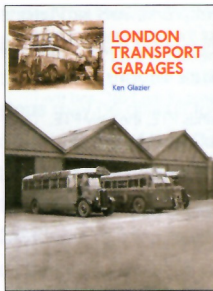
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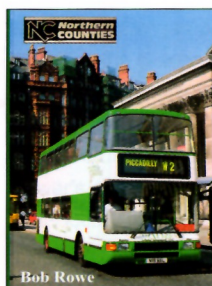
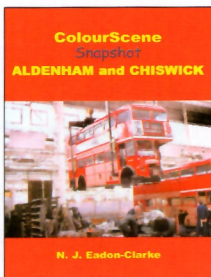
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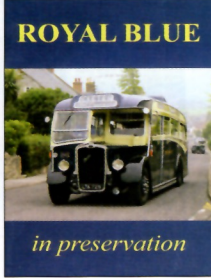
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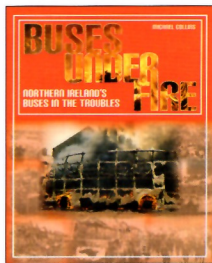
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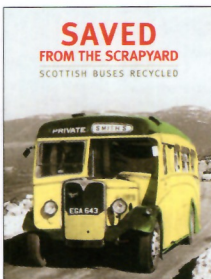
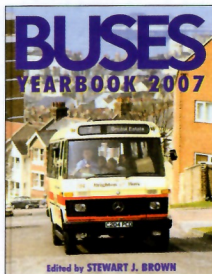
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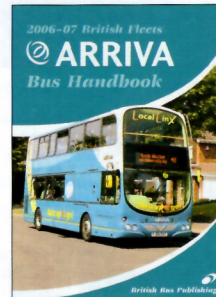
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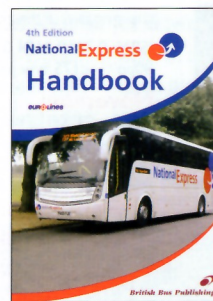
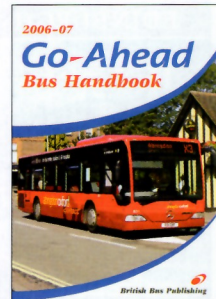


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No pomp, but good circumstance in Pompey

JULIAN OSBORNE sings the praises of Portsmouth bus drivers and encounters good service in other parts of the country

I had barely one foot on the First bus to town at Portsmouth Hard on New Year's Eve last when the driver greeted me with 'Good morning'. And this seems to be typical of service in the naval city.

Visiting in July, I noticed that both the remaining Leyland Lynxes were parked out at Hilsea as my coach arrived from Worthing. I decided to chance nipping back there before my city centre appointment. I was nearly snookered by roadworks and needed a way back that evaded the jam. In the good old days, all Commercial Road buses turned before the location of the delay, but now some take a different routing where more potential passengers live. I needed some up-to-date local knowledge.

As in Southdown days, crew changes take place at Hilsea and here was a driver awaiting a bus. He was extremely helpful about buses that missed the jam and, none of them then showing, took the trouble to tell me as his bus drew in, that one of the possibilities was due imminently. An additional route is no longer available as they cannot stop where the other buses do: their four-lane cross away from the stop is not now considered a feasible manoeuvre.

I was impressed with another First driver a few days later. He drove a First Berkshire bus from Bracknell and seemed to know most of his passengers and many passers-by; he asked a girl waiting at a pelican crossing if she wanted the bus and waited for her to get a green light and cross — and he persuaded a lorry driver to go round the block rather than block a stop in Camberley.

Knowing your passengers is something we tend to associate with country buses. Certainly my Western Greyhound 529 from Bodmin to St Austell (*Buses* last month) was a friendly affair and my Sargeants' trip from Knighton to Kington last year was almost spooky — no bells or prior words, but the driver regularly stopping and passengers getting off saying 'thank you'. But such things are by no means unknown in more urban areas.

In 2002, I travelled twice on one day with one of our regular drivers who had been off for a while. Many boarding passengers said how pleased they were to see her back. And saying 'hello' and 'thank you' — 'cheers' from the young — are common all over the country. Not from everyone, but enough in most places for it to be the norm. Even in London on one-door buses — and occasionally two-door ones.

Of course, it's a two-way street. We can all spot the drivers who prefer minimum contact and we tend to reciprocate, but there aren't many. Another operator who recently impressed me with the helpfulness of its staff was Arriva the Shires in Luton. Not to mention a very solicitous driver in Hamburg on a recent visit there.



Above: First Hampshire & Dorset open-top Bristol VRT 39971 (MOD 571P) in Portland last July while operating one of the Weymouth area services. **TOM BRAUND**

Mixed bag at Stagecoach

It's still a bit of a mixed bag at Stagecoach South. The arrival of the Tridents on the Coastliner 700 was not an unmitigated success with the timetable dissolving into chaos almost immediately. This was partly due to increased ridership from pensioners but became more noticeable after the Tridents appeared.

Some of the previous Olympians were soon working reliefs and this was eventually legitimised as additional timings. The general media meanwhile did its usual. Having got the BBC to cover the new Tridents, the company couldn't stop the reporter pooh-poohing it all ('...but it's still a bus', he said). I suppose it's a knee-jerk reaction like the press's similar inability to describe a school closure without saying the children must be pleased or to say anything nice about traffic wardens. Impartiality?

A popular technique for timetable restoration was to run buses on 'set down only'. This led to irritation at stops where people had been waiting for some time.

Neither was I impressed with the driver who said 'Yes', when asked last February if he knew his B10M was freezing (after an hour I was in full outside garb, buttoned and hatted). Not 'Yes, I'm sorry' or 'Yes, it has been reported' but just 'Yes'. On the other hand, we have some interesting new Kick-Start services in Worthing, designed to get across town avoiding regular hold-ups like West Worthing level crossing, and the 700 seems to have finally settled down. I also travelled on a bus out of Midhurst in August where the friendly driver was keen to set passengers down exactly where they wanted to be set down.

Driver assistance and useful 'pointless' buses

In response to Esther John's letter (*You Write*, September) I see much assistance to wheelchair passengers here in Surrey from drivers and other passengers — and in other places, the most recent being on an X53 Jurassic Coast double-decker out of Weymouth. This already famous route was the main component of my return from Cornwall (*Buses* last month) and Weymouth was the 'comfort break'.

You get a fine view of the bay from the back upstairs as the X53 pulls away (not dissimilar to the postcard in 'Millar's Tales' of July 2004; even the crowds were as plentiful on 7 September) and this is one of many fine sights on the X53. My colleague and regular correspondent, Malcolm Chase, was also in the Weymouth area recently and reports good things from Sureline (driver offering a photo stop at the Cerne Abbas 'man') and First (driver allowing folk to get to upstairs seats before moving his open-top VR).

In February I said I'd elaborate on the 'psychology of pointless buses' (from the customer's point of view). In 2001, the last bus back to us from Woking left at 16.30. Once Guildford garage absorbed Woking duties, Arriva ran some garage trips in service and thus reinstated later journeys. Even if you come back earlier, you might not go by bus at all without them as insurance.

John Aldridge has commented on garage journeys in London no longer being used to beef up the timetable and there are other places with such potential. Once in the schedule, it's important that drivers actually operate them; even empty, they may be drumming up business elsewhere.



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Deregulation or regulation? The choice is not clear-cut

I read with interest the debate in October *Buses* on the positives and negatives of events 20 years ago. What is apparent is the human tendency always to look at things in the past through rose-tinted spectacles.

I was employed as a middle manager in 1983-90 with Greater Manchester PTE and then the operating company GM Buses. With colleagues, I had the enormous task of taking the company through this process with huge political manoeuvring going on deflecting resources and not always being in the interests of customers, staff and the viability of the company. I no longer work in the industry, but remain passionate about public transport. Twenty years later, a change may now be appropriate, but reverting to a regulated situation similar to London, as often mooted, would, I feel, be a retrograde step.

Let me quote some examples of the past. I can remember sitting in many traffic commissioners' hearings in the 1970s where we tried to get a road traffic licence to operate a through limited stop service between Manchester and Chester in line with popular customer demands, only to be defeated by statutory objections from British Rail. Who won the argument, then? British Rail successfully opposed us and the service didn't happen. But as the rail service did not penetrate the south Manchester suburbs, which our proposed service would have done, potential customers turned to the car.

The same frustrations of regulation became even more apparent in political Manchester. At GMPTE, I identified markets where longer limited stop services could have been developed successfully through Bury and Rochdale, but was advised against their introduction because it might affect the local rail network. Even though my prime objective was to build the market at the expense of the private car, I could not get these ideas on the road on routes with poor rail penetration. Such innovation was stifled.

Another example was on routes where demand was outstripping available seats, but we were unable to manage this as in any other company and redeploy resources from other lightly used routes, because the latter were running in a 'highly political' area. I think Graham Stringer MP has forgotten about situations like these. Try going to a public meeting to explain situations like this where buses were regularly leaving 40 to 50 passengers while others see at the same time were empty. I had to.

We were basically in post to manage decline and ever increasing costs and fares. Something had to give to give the industry a future.

The current situation gives the industry the flexibility to try new things, react quickly to the market and get on and do the job. I think it is essential to react to the market. Isn't that where the likes of Tesco have



Above: K-Line of Honley is operating Mercedes-engined Metro (West Yorkshire PTE)-owned Optare Solo YJ56 WFK on a new free town bus service in Huddersfield.

STEPHEN WHITELEY

succeeded? It does, however, have shortcomings, for example how it rewards drivers. It never ceases to amaze me how low paid bus drivers are considering the skills required, the cost of the vehicles they drive and the number of lives entrusted into them every day. We need to address this with any legislative change.

Additionally, I would advocate a system of commercially viable services built around a strategic network promoted by the local authority. This two-phase approach could work with adequate subsidy. In simple terms, the local authority would issue permits for services identified as part of its strategic network — sometimes at nil cost — but operators would still be free to introduce other services and try new ideas.

The difficulty with this is if a new service started to undermine a service operated as part of a strategic network. The effects of this could be minimised by appropriate contract termination clauses and a lengthening of the current registration period to allow further negotiation and consultation to occur to limit the chances of market abstraction between two types of service. This would also ensure that local authorities remain aware of market needs and do not fall back into complacency, which a regulated system can condone.

There is no simple answer to whether regulation or deregulation is best, but I feel a mix of the two may be the answer for the long-term interest of our industry and those who rely on it for their livelihoods.

Derek Potts
Polperro, Cornwall

Franchising won't require London subsidies

I'm writing to correct the persistent misapprehension that franchising of bus services in the metropolitan areas will automatically equate to the current costs of bus franchising in London. This is repeated

by Go-North East managing director Peter Huntley in November *Buses*.

The response of major public transport providers to the market testing exercise carried out by South Yorkshire PTE and Nexus confirmed that a better network can be provided for broadly comparable levels of public subsidy to that which those networks currently receive. This can be achieved through cross-subsidy within networks, eliminating defensive over-bussing on some corridors and through the competition process for the franchise itself.

In short, franchising doesn't automatically require a substantial subsidy. London proves the point. In 1997/98, London had patronage growth and an integrated network for a £1million subsidy. And as London shows again, if more resources are available or become available, then franchising allows the quality of the network to be ratcheted up quickly.

We have produced a set of frequently asked questions about this issue — and other aspects of our quality contract proposals — which can be downloaded from the 'bus centre' of our website, www.pteg.net.

Finally, I would also like to emphasise that while we continue to explore the benefits that franchising could bring, we will also continue to invest heavily in voluntary partnership, including bus priority measures. Our level of capital spend on bus improvements, for example, is far higher than for local authorities in the rest of England.

Jonathan Bray
PTE Group Support Unit

London and the rest of the country

In his response (You Write last month) to my letter, I feel Colin Brazier's has made some assumptions about my views, which I had not intended to convey. I suspect we both sing from the same hymn sheet, but have a markedly different approach to

improving bus use. He via London-style regulation, me via the free market.

I too am car-less, totally by choice, and travel the length and breadth of Great Britain on an almost daily basis by public transport, bus for preference. I see at first hand the good, bad and plain awful. While thanking him for his political geography lesson on how wonderful French and American systems are, I must remind him that we all live in a democracy, and however much some of us would like to see our common enemy, the private car, reduced in use (I can very much agree with his sentiments about that), you also get what you vote for in this country.

Just try being a 'peasant' in these foreign paradises when you wish to go beyond the city boundaries where the all-singing, all-dancing swishy tramway stops, and you can certainly throw away your watch, as a sundial and five-week calendar would be far more useful. Contrast that with our ability to travel from Lands End to John o'Groats via just about everywhere we choose in-between.

Regarding my comments on the reasons why London will always far exceed other parts of the country in bus patronage per head, I should have actually said 'vast numbers of *young* immigrants...' i.e. those likely to be responsible for increasing population numbers ever higher. I found his attempt to portray me as some closet racist while ignoring hard fact a little sad, and while we have a thriving tourist industry in Yorkshire, and indeed all other parts of the UK, does he seriously suggest that the numbers equate with London? I think not.

Towns and cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle — the likely targets for political meddling — are enjoying excellent bus services at the moment, in spite of what their respective PTEs proclaim, and at little cost to the public purse. It would be a disaster to destroy this and return to the costly regulated networks that some bureaucrat decides upon. Remember, we have been there before.

Terence Uden
Woking

Politicians haven't earned our trust

I cannot agree with Graham Stringer MP's contention that we should give control of buses back to local politicians (*Buses*, October), because I don't consider that they have made the best use of the powers to help buses that they already have.

Aside from increasing costs, the biggest problem facing buses today is the battle against traffic congestion, which slows the journey and damages reliability for passengers, and increases costs for operators because more buses are needed to maintain a given timetable — cost increases ultimately reflected in fare levels.

Local politicians who are members of highway authorities (essentially counties, unitaries and metropolitan districts but not, note, PTEs) have powers to implement a wide range of measures that can help smooth the path for buses. Some examples are the provision of bus lanes, bus priority at traffic signals and turn bans at junctions where traffic flow is impeded. But highway

authorities can also implement and enforce parking and loading/unloading controls, which helps prevent traffic flow from being impeded by vehicles parked with only the driver's concerns in mind and no consideration to anyone else's problems.

Legislation requires surplus revenue from on-street parking charges to be used to fund transport projects (which includes measures to help buses), while on and off-street charging levels can be set so that it is cheaper for people to pay bus fares than to pay for parking all day, giving an opportunity to generate at least some revenue to help fund schemes.

I don't believe that local politicians have pursued these measures to anything like the level that they should, but they seem more ready to bend like straw when faced with the motorist and small business lobby — even at those authorities which have good words about buses in their local transport plan. MPs could help by ensuring that more funds are allocated for bus assistance measures, and that such funds are spent on effective schemes and ring fenced to prevent siphoning off into other policy areas.

In support of his arguments, Graham Stringer cites relevant social exclusion issues and also measures implemented by PTEs. However, PTEs and other authorities already have powers to arrange contract services where commercial provision is considered inadequate, and can seek a traffic regulation condition from the traffic commissioner to deal with cases of over provision.

Yes, PTEs have done some good things, but expensive interchanges are very much 'nice to have' and don't do much to help the service run properly. Yellow school buses are, I recall, an initiative imported from the US by one of the big bus groups, while guided bus schemes will find their place, but are never likely to be part of mainstream bus operation on a grand scale. Provision of information, including real time information, does involve local authorities in considerable expense, but so it does the operators as well. Operators receive regular bills for Traveline calls, for example, and invest in on-vehicle and other equipment for RTI schemes.

This is not about the private sector blaming the public sector, as Graham Stringer claims, but is about each taking the initiatives for which they are best suited. There are plenty of places where bus operators have made heavy investment in new vehicles and service enhancements. Brighton & Hove, Burnley & Pendle, Harrogate & District, several Stagecoach subsidiaries, Trent Barton and Wilts & Dorset to name some. Ridership has increased, but only some of these have involved major action by the highway authority beyond merely keeping bus shelters up to scratch.

I would like to see politicians of all parties and at local and national level engaging fully in the points I have raised, which really matter to bus services, and stop trying to play about with who runs the buses. The PTEs can't make the buses run better as they don't have highway powers, or development control powers to influence land use. It seems to me that they're just looking for something to do.

David Bean
Buntingford, Herts

Chester park-&-ride

I refer to last month's article by Harry Barker regarding Chester and other towns' and cities' park-&-ride. Like all operators, we value customer feedback and the overall picture presented in this article presents us in a poor light. It has certainly sets us some targets. However, it is disappointing that Mr Barker appears not to value his concerns as highly as we do in that he has chosen not to bring his observations to our attention before now.

From the information in the article, I have been able to identify that one of the vehicles he saw leaving the city centre was scheduled to run into the depot for fuel and one of the others was its replacement. One point of clarification is that the only interworking is of the Boughton Heath and Sealand Road sites before 09.00, which cross town to offer additional stops for commuters. Other than this, all services have their own colour coded individual stops.

The local newspaper article to which he refers puzzles me and colleagues in Chester City Council Parking Services. That article was clearly incorrect as passenger numbers are currently static with no downwards trend. Another example of local media misinformation creating an impression?

John R. Lee
Traffic Manager, ChesterBus

What is the future for preserved buses?

I guess that like many public transport enthusiasts, I was deeply saddened to see the obituaries in last month's *Buses* to two more long-time enthusiasts and friends, Chris Moyes and Tony Peart. Both of them had collected vehicles and artefacts that are so precious to our transport history. Having been involved in bus preservation since the mid-1960s, I consider myself richly privileged to have known Chris and Tony and to have listened to both of them expounding their thoughts on our hobby.

I agree that Tony's vehicles were always presented in immaculate condition, as were those that Chris owned. It seems to me that the standards have dropped since those balmy days of the 1960s and some vehicles on the rally field today look more suited to the yards at Wombwell and area than being displayed to the public. Both Chris and Tony would be horrified to see our hobby being dragged down to lower levels than those that they both so keenly espoused.

In recent times, we have lost some of what one might call the doyens of the bus and trolleybus preservation field, and my thoughts obviously turn to the future. I guess that I am far nearer the undertakers' door than many who read *Buses*, but I do wonder what is the future for so many of the vehicles and artefacts that have become someone's pride and joy over the years? Yes, I know that there are a great many museum collections, but not all preserved vehicles are in them. My dear friend Alan Cross mentioned this problem some years ago with regard to photographs and the like. Do we need to start looking ahead with regard to vehicles?

I recall having the chance to purchase some ex-London Transport vehicles some years ago, but having the London utility Guy G351, decided to concentrate on that. Sadly,

that meant that an ex-London STL-type and a utility Bristol were not saved, although I had the funds to purchase them, if not to restore them. I have regretted my lack of action ever since, but cannot wind back the clock to right the wrong I clearly committed then in old vehicle terms. Maybe we enthusiasts owe it to those like Chris and Tony who have gone before us to set in motion some system to ensure that vehicles that have been so clearly loved and cherished are not lost forever.

Rev John L. Lines MBE
Deal, Kent

Don't rush into complete vehicle restoration

I was delighted to see the newly uncovered GCC 3, a 1959 Ford Thames Trader from the Grayscroft Coaches fleet, at this year's Showbus. My pleasure was revived when I saw your photograph of this star of the show gracing your November Pictureview centre spread. The coach had a charm, which attracted a host of admirers throughout the day.

However, I wonder whether a full restoration 'to its glory of 44 years ago' will actually enhance its appeal. In the antiques trade, patina is all-important and makes a vast difference to an item's value. I suggest that the appeal and value of this wonderful coach is centred largely on it being in 'as found' condition.

Nigel Robertshaw
Bradford

Corgi defends OOC RTW

I feel I must reply to the review of our recently released RTW model, which was featured in October *Buses*. While Corgi always values constructive criticism and places great importance on listening to customer feedback, on this occasion I would like to address some inaccuracies in the article and, where small errors have occurred, give some explanation for them.

First, I would like to respond to John Lidstone's comments regarding the accurate representation of the actual vehicle, as Corgi has taken great care to take measurements from London Transport's original drawings. For example, he mentions that the model's trafficator indicator 'ears' are too small. However, we have double-checked the size and they are correct. Likewise, the tooling is right in relation to the size of the cab, the shape of the radiator (which does taper towards the bottom) and the rear view mirrors. In addition, the front passenger windows were unequal on the original bus and our model has them in the correct position.

Other criticisms relating to detail are unfounded simply because of the size we are working with. With regard to the comment on the colour of the trafficator indicator 'ears', they should have a red arm and black surround, but we are only able to produce in two colours i.e. red/orange or black/orange. On something as small as 2.1mm, I'm sure you'll understand that it is simply not viable to have four spraying operations and we took the decision that they look better all red than all black. The bonnet handles are too small to be plugged

in and the outline has been missed off the fleetnumber, as even the finest line would look far too heavy.

Corgi has also never painted interior ceilings and window pillars. Unfortunately, it would be totally impractical, particularly on a £24.99 model. We work to offer the best value for money in terms of detail and accuracy that is economically viable.

That said, there are issues with the model that we have taken on board and agree require running changes on future releases. These include the depth of the front ventilator and the shape of the top corners of the half-drop windows, which can't be seen on the drawings. We have also measured the rear platform window and, as John Lidstone says, it is 0.96mm too wide. Other genuine errors in production, which will be amended, include comments relating to the rear platform rail bar, fuel filler, the position of the rear corner advert and the route number font. The route number was also missed in the canopy box.

You may also be interested to learn that the BESI bus location system panel was intentionally put on the casting. It will be removed from other RTWs as and when appropriate, but gives a nice variant particular to this first model.

Above all, we feel that the few errors are minimal and that the model did not deserve the review it received. I'm sure you'll agree that it is important that reviews are accurate, as unfair criticism may deter collectors from making a purchase and the knock-on effect can only be detrimental to the hobby.

Adrienne Fuller
Corgi Classics, Leicester

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Dairy dates 2007/8

Please put these dates in your diary and watch out for our next events

■ **East Grinstead (LT Country area) - Sunday 22nd April 2007**
Sevenoaks April 2008 will be run bi-annually with the above event

■ **Potters Bar (3RT60 special celebration) - Sunday 20th May 2007**

■ **Hertford, Harlow and Stevenage (LT Country area) - Sunday 10th June 2007**
Hitchin & Luton 2008 will run bi-annually with the Hertford event

■ **Swanley (Country and Central area) - Sunday 8th July 2007**
(Gravesend 2008 will be run bi-annually with the Swanley event)

■ **Eastbourne (mini run day) - Sunday 22nd July 2007**
Eastbourne July 2008 running day will be bi-annually with the mini run day.

■ **Dorking and Reigate (Country area) - Sunday 2nd September 2007**
Guildford September 2008 will be run bi-annually with the Dorking event

■ **Loughton (Central area) - Sunday 16th September 2007**
September 2008 central area event to be confirmed

**Note - Events are subject change and will be update at
'Ian's bus stop' web page and future issues of 'Buses' magazines.**



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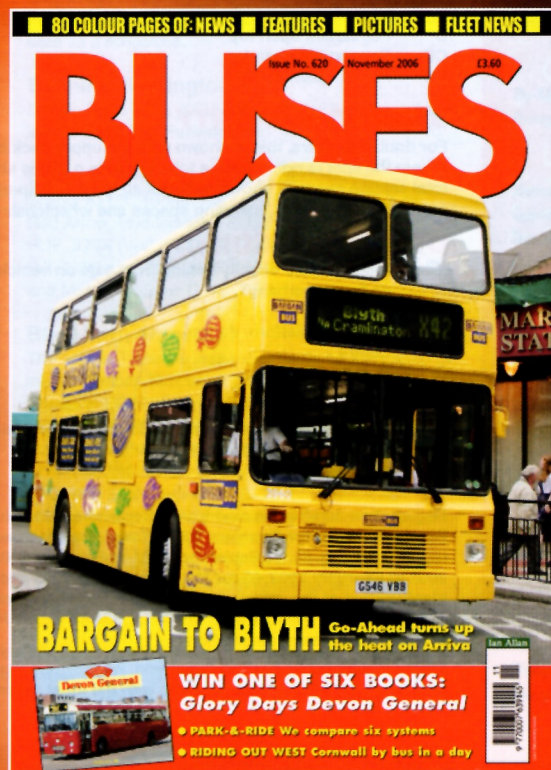


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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva Midlands buys Hispano Habit demonstrator**
- **Black Prince PD3 sold to Dew's**
- **Major orders for First Manchester, Go North East**
- **Parry's gets UK's last Neoplan Starliner**
- **Enviro400 Volvo prototype for Solent Blue Line**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/TV-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VL7 48*), with the most recent given first.

Abbey Coaches, Middlesbrough

The first low-floor bus here is rare side-engined Van Hool A308 J687 DYR from British Airways. It has a full-length low floor and currently has an externally accessed rear luggage hold.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Former Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4/Alexander (Belfast) RH-type H47/27D 93 D 10175 has been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Further to August Fleet News, Leyland Fleetline/ECW ULS 658T remains in as-acquired condition and hasn't yet been repainted in original Midland Scottish livery.

Ambassador Travel, Great Yarmouth

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere G261 UAS came from Finchley Coaches and was formerly with Rapson, Brora. Former Arriva Derby Volvo Citybus/Marshall B140 GAU (Fleet News, October) was acquired from Tally Ho!, Kingsbridge and operates factory contracts outside Great Yarmouth.

Amos, Eydon, Northants

Ex-Isle of Man Transport all-Leyland Olympian/H47/31F BMN 84/5G and Northern Counties H47/30F-bodied BMN 70M, 59V were acquired in September.

Andrews, Tideswell, Derbyshire

A 14m Setra has been on demonstration, but a 14m Neoplan Euroliner N316SHD/C61Ft, YN06 FTX, was added to the fleet in September.

Right: It turns out that Anglian 501 (YJ56 ASZ) is the last Optare Spectra-bodied VDL DB250 to be delivered, 15 years after the first of these bodies was built. **COLIN HUMPHREY**

Anglian, Beccles, Suffolk

An extraordinary addition to the fleet is 501 (YJ56 ASZ) the last new Optare Spectra H74F-bodied VDL DB250 built. It is branded for route 588 (Halesworth-Bungay-Norwich).

Aquarius Travel, Camborne, Cornwall

Former Arriva Midlands Dennis Falcon HC SDA421/East Lancs EL2000 B48F G301 DPA is here, still in Arriva colours.



Archway, Poulton-le-Fylde

Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RZ/Alexander H45/30F E222 WBG has been acquired ex-JP Travel, Middleton. MCW Metrobus BYW has been withdrawn.

Arriva Cymru AA

The second of the new Optare Tempo X1260/B40F, 2869 (YJ06 YRO), is in service.

In from Arriva North West are Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/East Lancs B40F 1166/70 (M166/70 WKA) and Dart SLF/Marshall B38F 7618/29 (T618 PNC, V629 DVU), while Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2101/2 (R601/2 MHN) and 7544/5 (P544/5 MBU) have gone in the opposite direction.

Dart/Pointer 1101/4 (L941/34 GYL) have gone to Arriva Midlands, 1108/10 (L938/40 GYL) to J Line, Smethwick and DAF SB3000/Van Hool coach 5003 (M945 LYR) to Arriva Southern Counties' New Enterprise fleet.

Arriva Derby AA

Optare Excel 2999 (P316 FAW) carries 'no mobile phones to be used' stickers from its days at Shrewsbury, where mobile phones allegedly caused its engine to cut out.

Volvo Ailsa/Northern Counties 112 (SRC 112X) has become a Fundays Playbus at Mexborough.

Arriva London AA

New are Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart B24D PDL124-36 (LJ56 APZ, ARF/O/U/X/Z, ASO/U/V/X, AOW-Y).

Dennis Darts DPP421-31 (R421-31 COO) have gone to Arriva North East, while Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has sold Leyland Olympian L65 (C65 CHM) to the Metropolitan Police for training purposes.

Arriva Midlands AA

Fleet modernisation for Leicester continues with further VDL DB250/Wright Pulsar Gemini H41/26F at Wigston, 4759-77 (FJ06 ZSE-G/K/L/N-P, YJ56 KFA, FJ06 ZRN-P, YJ56 KFC-G/K/L). Also delivered are the outstanding Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H41/29F, 4007/9 (FJ56 OBE/G). The VDL SB200/Wright Commanders are B44F and 3722-6 are registered FJ06 ZTH/K-N. The new single-deckers and Volvos are at Leicester Southgates.

Three used Volvo B7Ls have also been acquired for the new Skylink service between Leicester and Nottingham East Midlands Airport. Ex-Whitelaw, Stonehouse are Wright Eclipse B41F-bodied 3613/4 (SA02 CVV, CDF) and, following a two-year stint at First York, Hispano Habit B41F demonstrator 3615 (BX03 OVZ), which previously visited this company in 2003.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 2075/7 (L934/41 GYL) have come from Arriva Cymru.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 3053 (F33 ENF) has been renumbered 9503 for its new role as a driver trainer. Tiger/Plaxton Paramount trainer 9502 (49 XBF) reverted to its original F603 CET, its cherished number transferred to DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 4598 (L94 HRF).

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander Sprint 1246 (N466 EHA), Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties 4136/41 (G36 HKY, G711 HKW), N113DRB/Alexander RH 4153/4/7 (F153/4/7 DET), Leyland Olympian/ECW 4527/8/45/6 (B187/90 BLG, B274/5 LPH) and Optare-bodied 4560/1 (E160/1 OMD) have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, which has sold Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties 4143 (H803 RWJ) to TM Travel, Chesterfield and 4136/41 and similar 4142 (G714 LKW) to Geldard, Leeds.

Arriva North East AA

Ex-Arriva London Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B34F 1646-56 (R421-31 COO) are here following their refurbishment at Pickering's.

Former Arriva Yorkshire 23-year-old Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F 7228/9 (A580/4 NWX) are in use at Durham and Ashington respectively. Following its low-bridge collision at Middlesbrough, Durham County Volvo Olympian/East Lancs 7429 (M693 HPF) has received a replacement roof from ex-Arriva Southend Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type 5393 (F573 SMG).

MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta 1557 (L102 MEH) and Optare MetroRiders 2619/23 (P619/23 FHN) have been reinstated, 1557 replacing accident damaged 1510 (K510 BHN) and 2619 replacing Darlington-based MetroRider 898 (P57 XTN), which has mechanical problems. Vecta 1548 (L548 GHN) and MetroRiders 2612/8 (P612/8 FHN) are withdrawn, MCW Metrobuses 611/25 (GYE 396W, C354 BUJ) are withdrawn to reserve and DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4016/8/29/96 (K416 BHN, L418 FHN, R429 SPY, G257 UYK) have been sold.

Contrary to official allocation listings, Durham County Leyland Lynx 2s 5009/19 (H253 PAJ, H338 TYG) remain in use at Bishop Auckland and DAF SB220/Ikarus 4084 (J927 CYL) similarly at Darlington.

The oldest and newest DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige buses, 4059/82 (R701 KCU, V653 LWT) have been transferred from Durham County to Tees.

Arriva North West AA

Transferred from Arriva Cymru are Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver B27F 395 (V941 KAG), Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F 2101/2 (R601/2 MHN) and B38F-seated 7544/5 (P544/5 MBU). Transferred in the opposite direction are Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/East Lancs 1166/70 (M166/70 WKA) and Dart SLF/Marshall 7618/29 (T618 PNC, V629 DVU).

Leyland Olympians disposed of are ECW-bodied 3073 (B513 LFP) and Northern Counties-bodied 3208/9/12/3 (G508 SFT etc).

Arriva Southend AA

Step-entrance midibuses drafted in permanently from Arriva Southern Counties to replace four Dennis Dominator double-deckers include Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer B40F 3606/9 (L606/9 EKM) and Dennis Dart 9SDL/Northern Counties Paladin B35F 3133 (L133 YVK); 3606 had been on loan and 3609 reintroduced the B6 to this fleet before suffering engine failure. Double-deckers are confined to services 1 (Southend-Hadleigh) and 7/8 (Shoebury-Rayleigh). Dominators withdrawn include the oldest in the fleet, East Lancs-bodied 5276 (G626 EKA).

The roof of withdrawn Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 5393 (F573 SMG) has been used to repair a damaged East Lancs-bodied Olympian with Arriva North East (see under that heading).

Arriva Southern Counties AA

New are Mercedes-Benz Citaros 3901-3 (BX56 VTU-W) in a silver and blue livery for the extension of route 436 (Guildford-Byfleet) to Brooklands, Mercedes-Benz World and Weybridge Station. DaimlerChrysler is financially supporting the extension and a frequency upgrade.

Selkent Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H45/24D 17322 (X322 NNO) and similar but H43/19D 17478 (LX51 FLP) have been on loan at Dartford since mid-September while refurbishment work on ex-London DAF DB250s 6224-36 continues. Mechanical work has been undertaken at Arriva Southend, repainting by Pickering's at Thurmaston.

Mercedes-Benz 711D/Plaxton Beaver 1475/7 (P475/7 DPE) have been sold to Pickford, Chippenham.

Right: The first fleet order for the new Plaxton Centro bus body has been delivered on 12 VDL SB120s for Arriva North West at Winsford. This is 2608 (CX56 CDY). **IAN DENNIS**

December 2006

New Enterprise has DAF SB3000/Van Hool coach M945 LYR from Arriva Cymru and has been using Arriva the Shires' unusual Dennis Javelin/UVG UniStar C55F 4037 (P100 LOW). Scania K113CRB/Van Hool 2031 (UJI 2338, G897 DEH) has been withdrawn.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types 3330/1 (M234 TBV, M782 PRS) are being used on schools work and as staff buses at Stevenage, replacing Mercedes-Benz 811Ds and Ford Transit vans. Green Line 797-liveried Dennis Javelin 4029 (M101 CCD) is confined to schools work.

Allover yellow Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW 5033 (SNV 933W) is the last VR at Luton, appropriately having been new to United Counties. It operates extras on service 24.

Dart/Marshall 3103 (L300 BUS) has been reinstated — as reported last month, it was towed away for scrap in August — while Dennis Javelin/UVG 4037 (P100 LOW) is with Arriva Southern Counties' New Enterprise fleet.

Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has sold Volvo B10M driver trainer 4038 (ADZ 4731) to London General.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

More VDL SB200/Wright Commander B44F at Belle Isle are 1404-8 (YJ56 JYK-MO/P), ostensibly for services 496/498 (Wakefield-Hemsworth-South Elmsall).

Dennis Lance/Alexander Strider 810 (L810 NNW) was badly damaged by fire on 6 October.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 52 (J23 GCX) has been transferred to the training department, replacing Leyland Lynx trainer 331 (G331 NUM). Dennis Dart 155 (J467 OKP) has been withdrawn.

Leyland Olympians 580/4 (A580/4 NWX) have been transferred to Arriva North East, while Dennis Darts/Northern Counties Paladin 139/42 (L129/52 YVK) have gone to Arriva Scotland West.

Former driver training Lynx 322 (G322 NNW) has passed to the West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Olympian 581 (A581 NWX) to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Ashley Travel, Renishaw, Derbyshire

The remains of cannibalised Leyland Atlantear/Northern Counties A679 HNB have been sold.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Expanding on last month's report, new vehicles delivered in October were Plaxton Primo/B28F midibuses 456, 556, 656

(YN56 NHA-C) and Dennis Dart SLF/MCV Evolution B40F 156, 256, 356 (AE56 LWJ-L).

Bank View, Freckleton, Lancs

Ex-Cumfybus, Southport Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RZ/Alexander H45/30F E218 WBG has been acquired via Belle Vue Auctions, Manchester.

Beacon Bus, Dolton, Devon

New in August for tendered services taken over from First were Optare Solo M950/B32F PL06 TFV and B33F-seated PL06 TFX/Y. Secondhand Solo M850/B29F Y341 BWP was acquired at the same time, ex-Goldstraw, Leek.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre VE

Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner CN53 NWC is back in service after accident repairs.

Bellamy, Nottingham

Former First Essex Leyland Lynx F409 LTW is in use here as a schoolbus.

Bennett, Warrington

Dennis Darts J633 KCU and J944 MFT are back from loan to Blue Bus, Penwortham.

Black & White, Scunthorpe

Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C51Ft K535 EHE is ex-Red Arrow, Huddersfield. Sold are Leyland National HUF 579X (400 DCD, RUF 430X), Leyland Tigers RJ1 2723 and A160 NKE, MCW Metroliner B609 LSO and Mercedes-Benz G112 TND.

Blackburn Transport

The sale to Transdev was expected to be completed by mid-November. Further ex-Lothian Leyland Olympian/ECW repainted in Schools+ livery are 35/7 (A730 YFS, B737 GSC). The loss of school contracts prompted withdrawal of Olympian/Northern Counties 21-5 (E907/10/4/7/06 KYR), Roe-bodied 28 (A151 FPG) and ECW-bodied 29 (B272 LPH). Although offered for sale, one contract being re-awarded led to the retention of 28/9 at least.

Leyland Titans 91/9 (KYV 521, 465X) went to Consett Travel, 94 (KYV 544X) to Lancashire Constabulary.

Below: The burnt out remains of Arriva Yorkshire 810 (L810 NNW) in Drightlington, between Leeds and Dewsbury, on 6 October. Identical Alexander Strider-bodied Dennis Lance 811 speeds past towards Leeds. **STEWART J. BROWN**



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

Blackpool Transport

The loss of several school contracts led to withdrawal of all Leyland Atlanteans apart from 364 (B364 UB), retained as a heritage vehicle and due to be repainted. The last public service working of Atlanteans was on 29 October, when 358/60/2 ran on Line 20 and 361/3/4 on Line 6, the latter serving the Lancastrian Transport Trust's open weekend at Marton. Blackpool Transport announced this is now the 'sole survivor of nearly ninety Atlanteans we have operated, before going to a museum.' It went on to say: 'But from Monday 30th only modern, quiet, comfortable buses will be in service on the Metro network'. Thus retired are 352-4/7/8/60-3 (UHG 352-4Y, A357/8/60-2 HHG, B363 UB), all stored at Marton apart from 352, earmarked for preservation sale. 355/9 (A355/9 HHG) have gone for scrap, 356 (A356 HHG) for conversion into a playbus.

The Kirkham Roamer service has been replaced by an extension of Line 2 to Wesham, increasing the vehicle requirement for Line 2 to 20. Kirkham Roamer-liveried Optare Solo 285 (YN04 XYZ) has been repainted green and yellow.

Optare MetroRider 511 (S511 LHG) is back in service after a long period delicensed with accident damage.

A surprise move was the delicensing of Line 11 DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 115-7/30 (H115-7 YHG, K130 UVF). Pool-liveried Leyland Olympians 373/6 (F373 AFR, M376 SCK) have been making appearances on the 11.

City Sightseeing-liveried MCW Metrobuses 814/92 (BOK 68V, GYE 392W) were drafted in to extract passengers from a 'tram jam' after a twin-car set derailed at Bispham loop.

Black Prince, Morley

The last vehicle owned, Leyland Titan PD3/4/East Lancs 702 (FTF 702F), has been sold to Dew, Somersham.

Bluebird, Middleton

New is Alexander Dennis Dart/B37F 17 (DD56 BLU).

Blue Bus, Penwortham

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint PAZ 5359 (E92 YWB) has been withdrawn. Dennis Dart/Wright Handybuses J633 JCU and J944 MFT have returned from long-term loan to Bennett, Warrington.

Blue Diamond, Harlow

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B37D M96 WBW is here from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet. It was last with Brighton & Hove, which acquired it from Stagecoach South East, though it was new to Thames Transit.

Blue Triangle, Rainham, Essex

New are Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart B33D DP208/9 (SN56 AYC/D). The previous DP208, P746 HND, also a Pointer Dart, is with Renown, Bexhill.

Brighton & Hove GA

Dennis Darts 73/6/8 (M73/6/8 CYJ) have gone to Southern Vectis, via Wilts & Dorset, while Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has sold 81 (M95 WBW) to Carter, Ipswich.

Brylaine, Boston

Acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is J717 VEV (91 D 10122), a former Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4/Alexander (Belfast) RH-type H47/27D.

Bulmer, North Stainley, N Yorkshire

Former Eastern National Bristol MW5G/ECW B45F 1348 (208 YVX), in Tilling green and cream, operated the Wensleydale Vintage Bus Tour from Ripon to Hawes via Redmire on Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays in August and September. Also used was former United Bristol L5G/ECW LHN 823.

Bu-Val, Rochdale

Five of the rare Marshall Minibuses have been scrapped, P461 EFL, P550 JEG, P403 KAV, P980 PTM and R113 VLX.

C&G Coaches, Chatteris, Cambs

Recent acquisitions are Scania K93/Plaxton G780 CFA, Volvo B10M/Berkhof MIB 290 and Volvo B10M/Plaxton G815 BPG. Scania R14, 44 CNG, CG53 CNG have been withdrawn.

Cardiff Bus

Optare MetroRiders reinstated are 104/41 (L104 GBO, N141 PTG), but 136 (N136 PTG) is withdrawn and 143 (N143 PTG) is a driver trainer. A further Volvo Ailsa B55-10 MkIII/Alexander withdrawn is 445 (A162 HLV).



Above: Blackpool Transport 360 (A360 HHG), one of four withdrawn East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlanteans reinstated for the farewell weekend, on the prom at Blackpool on Sunday, 29 October on service 20 (Zoo-Town Centre-South Pier-Marton Mere). **MEL HOLLEY**



Above: Bulmer's former Eastern National Bristol MW5G, 1348 (208 YVX), in Hawes station yard while operating the Wensleydale Vintage Bus Tour in September. **JOHN YOUNG**

Castle Buses, Liverpool

Another Olympian here from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, is ex-Dublin Bus Leyland/ Alexander RH J714 CEV (92 D 136).

Cedar, Bedford

Acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is J697 CEV (FC 1067), a tri-axle Leyland Olympian ONC3R56C18Z4/5RZ/Alexander RH DPH57/45F ex-Citybus, Hong Kong.

Central Coach Tours, Wickersley, S Yorks

Rare Plaxton Paramount-bodied ACE Puma E923 LCP has passed to Running Footman, Martlesham.

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne

Acquired are Volvo B12M/Jonckheere Mistral C49Ft FC02 DRX/Z from Volvo Bus (dealer), Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetham C33F YN53 EJG from Perry, Malton and Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer Vanguard III C70F M170 UKN (EC 45 AA), to be re-registered YIL 9717.

Sold are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount YIL 7734/5 and rare Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 321 registered YIL 8823, along with LDV 400 minibuses M969 AGO.

Choice, Willenhall

A programme to re-register vehicles with Northern Irish marks has started. 102 (S781 RNE) has become JJZ 5368; 103/4 (T428/9 EBD) are OUI 9143, 2376; 115/6 (R408/9 XFL) are OUI 7148, 9120; 117/8 (R519/21 YRP) are JJZ 5291, 5312.

Classic, Annfield Plain TGM

New by October was plain white Volvo B12BT/Van Hool Astrolab double-deck coach WA56 ENN.

Click Services, Pemberton

Acquired for services in Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Southport are Optare MetroRider MR17/DP20F M870 KCY from Town Lynx, St Helens, and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F M108 BLE and B39F P299 MLD from South Gloucestershire, Patchway.

The Coachmasters, Rochdale

Dual-doorway ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian BBW 216Y is here from Worth, Enstone.

Copeland, Muir

Leyland Royal Tiger Doyen OIB 5402 (D387 VAO) is here after a short stint with Val's Classic, Chase Terrace.

CT Plus (Yorkshire), Wakefield

Further BMC Condor 220/B57F schoolbuses operated on behalf of Metro are BC015/7 (YJ56 LMK/F). A new base in Leeds (in the Geldard Road area) was established to take over operation of the Access Bus fleet from First Leeds from 1 October.

Cumfybus, Southport

New Optare Solo M950s MX06 YXV, YYA are confirmed as B33F with Cummins engines, while the SlimLine Solos are all B24F. Tri-axle Fiat Ducato/Rohill Y817 LBV has been acquired from Lancashire County Council, while Optare Alero YP52 BPE is ex-Wardle, Stoke.

Bank View, Freckleton has acquired Leyland Olympian/Alexander E218 WBG.

D&G, Adderley Green, Staffs

85 (R54 OCK) is a Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Spryte from the recently defunct Beaumont, Quedgeley. Ex-JP Travel, Middleton Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 88/9 (T551/2 HNH) and 109 (X706 UKS) are based at Crewe. 108/9/12 (X702/6 UKS, DE51 EWJ) have been re-registered JJZ 5278, 3437, 5248 respectively. Similar W586 YDM, acquired from Swans, Chadderton, is to don CheshireRider livery.

In regular use on the Crewe-Madeley-Newcastle corridor are Dart/Wright Handibus 79 (H367 XGC), MPD 107 (SL02 GYE) and ex-Stagecoach Merseyside Dart/Alexander Dash 179 (K574 NHC).

De Courcey, Coventry

Further to August Fleet News, the MAN 14.220HOC/MCV Evolution B40F on the Coventry South park-&-ride are 554/5 (AE06 OPJ/K), while another similar vehicle, 557

(AE56 LWH) arrived in September. Also reported here is similar all-white AE05 OVC.

Acquired from Go West Midlands are Volvo Citybus/Northern Counties H47/38F G110/3/4/21/2 NGN and G131 PGK.

MCW Metrobus MkII 701 (A101 WVP) is in fleet livery after a spell in Asda colours, and is branded for new service 22, as is 740 (A740 WVP). Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus 552 (HV52 WTD) is branded for new service 74/75 (Nuneaton-Coventry).

Withdrawn ex-Manchester Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties A715 LNC remains here.

Denny, Cudworth, S Yorks

Former South Yorkshire, Ackworth Optare MetroRider K449 YVW (K300 LCT) is here.

Dew, Somersham, Cambs

New Optare Solo AE06 YYU is here to work tendered service 106 (Ely-Rampton), won from Burton, Haverhill. A notable arrival for use primarily on private hires and weddings is 1967 Leyland Titan PD3/4/East Lancs H41/32F FTF 702F from Black Prince, Morley.

Dobson, Lostock Gralam, Cheshire

Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Derwent DP51F H620 RAH, new to Eastern Counties, has been acquired from First Somerset & Avon.

Docklands Minibus GA

London Central Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B32F LDP16 (P516 RYM) has been on loan to this recent addition to the Go-Ahead fold.

Doyle, Ripley, Derbyshire

Optare Solo W678 DDN is ex-Bevan, Lydney. Also acquired is former Marchwood Motorways Dennis Dart SLF/UVG R556 UOT.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham VE

Further new Optare Solos are YJ56 AUN/O/X, AVN. YJ56 AUX is in silver and expected to gain Nexus 'Link up' vinyls. More Volvo B12B/Caetano Levante C49FLt for National Express work are FJ56 PBUV/Y/Z.

TransBus Mini Pointer Dart 5206 (FM52 GKX) has been in use. Further acquisitions confirmed are Dennis Falcon/East Lancs G385/7 EKA, G309 DPA from Arriva Midlands. DAF SB220LC/Optare Delta B49F J302 BVO is also here from Dukes, Berry Hill and is in Veolia red and grey corporate livery.

Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton N784 EUA has been sold to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

East London Group

Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 34272-5 (T272-5 FJN) are in reserve.

East Yorkshire EY

The latest six Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urbans include 343/4 (YX56 FHL/M).

Edwards, Llantwit Fardre

Acquired are DAF SB2305/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C53F F222 RJX from Carmel, Northlew; Dennis Javelin 12SDA/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C53F G453 PGO from Bluebird, Roche; Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint B25F M699 EDD and M705/6 JDG from Stagecoach Devon and MCW Metrobus DR101/14/H43/28D KYV 716X from Roberts, Hugglescote.

Scania K-series/Irizar Century Y36 HHE has been re-registered YKG 53. DAF/Caetano Algarve PVV 315 (F208 EWN) has been withdrawn.



Above: De Courcey, Coventry 552 (HV52 WTD), the Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dennis Dart SLF painted in a dedicated livery for new service 74/75. **BEN MORROLL**

Right: First Essex 57002 (YN56 NHF), numerically the second of a pair of Plaxton Primos for town service in Harwich. Plaxton exhibited 57001 at Euro Bus Expo. **IVAN WATTS**

Embling, Guyhirn

Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW HIL 6457 (RUA 450W) has been acquired from Moxon, Oldcotes and another VR is CJH 121V from Flagfinders, Braintree, for spares.

The associated fleet of Judd, Manea has acquired VRT/SL3/ECW DNG 233T and Leyland Olympian KFM 128Y are acquisitions for former Alec Head/Morley's-service 701, which is no stranger to elderly buses.

Emsworth & District, Southbourne, W Sussex

Latest addition here is Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider F306 FWB from Stagecoach Lincolnshire, still in Road Car white, yellow and green.

Ensignbus, Purfleet EB

Ex-Metrolink Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B31F R619/27 VEG are in service in red as others are being repaired/repainted. It is likely that more will enter service as it is planned to convert the X80 to low-floor.

Excel, Stansted

New is Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart B29F midibus EU56 FTO, while 561-3 (AE56 MDV/X/Y) are MAN 14.220/MCV Evolutions in BAA/Herts County Council green/grey livery for upgraded service 308 (Stansted Airport-Bishops Park).

An older Dart acquired is Northern Counties B35F-bodied L113 YVK, latterly with Arriva Southern Counties. Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-type single-decker M231 TBV has been sold.

First Berkshire FG

Further ex-First Manchester Scania L94UB/Wright Access-ultralow B40F are 60165/8 (S112/5 TNB).

First Bristol FG

Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 42961/2 are now WX06 OMV/U, not the other way round. Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 41195 (S195 VLD) has gone to First Cymru.

First Cymru FG

MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution demonstrator AE06 OPG was returned by mid-September. Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall



B33F 41195 (S195 VLD) has been transferred from First Bristol. Former MoD Dennis Javelin 67501 (M626 XWS) remains on loan from Bristol Bus & Coach (dealer) at Carmarthen

Contrary to a previous report, Dart 46702 (L602 FKG) remains in service at Llanelli, but Dart/Wright Handybus 45316 (JDZ 2316) is withdrawn.

First Devon & Cornwall FG

The first of the nine Alexander Dennis Enviro400s, 33411-9 (WA56 FUB/D/E, FTKN-P/T/U), was launched at the Euro Bus Expo on 7 November, and all nine are due in Plymouth by 31 December for The George and Milehouse park-&-ride service.

The eight Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolynes used by First Somerset & Avon on Bath park-&-ride are being transferred here. First to arrive were 32709/11/3/4 (W709 RHT etc), which replace Volvo Olympians on service X80 (Torbay-Plymouth).

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s 42443-5 (P443-5 TCY) have gone to First Eastern Counties.

Just three Bristol VRTs remained active by September, including 38697, 38747 (AFJ 697, 747T). All will be out of service by the end of the year, and a last VR running day is planned. During the summer, VRs 38608, 38908/28 (XDV 608S, VEX 288X, XHK 228X) were taken out of service, while VRT/SL2 30001 (GBF 78N) suffered engine failure, but returned to use with a unit from withdrawn VRT/SL3 39906 (LEU 256P).

First Eastern Counties FG

Transferred here are all-Leyland Olympian/H47/29F 30235 (J155 YRM) and Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/30F 34333 (H132 FLX) from First Manchester, similar 34337 (H137 FLX) from First London (all three were new to Capital Citybus), and Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B35F 42443-5 (P443-5 TCY) from First Devon & Cornwall; 42443/4 are in Rail-Link livery, 42445 in Barbie.

First Essex FG

This operator has the first two Plaxton Primos for First. In service first was 57002 (YN56 NHF), 57001 being retained by Plaxton for display at Euro Bus Expo. Demonstrator YN06 CYE covered for it.

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Interurban C55F 60031 (R346 GHS) and 60129/30 (R345/4 GHS) have been transferred from First Potteries.

continued overleaf...



Left: As reported last month, Express Motors of Penygroes is the first UK operator to buy an MAN 18.220 with Portuguese-built Marcopolo Viale. Here, CX56 AHZ loads in Blaenau Ffestiniog. **CHRIS CLEGG**

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 46116 (K916 CVW) has been officially reinstated for further service, although it was never taken out of service), 46120 (M920 TEV) taking its place for disposal. Also withdrawn is similar 46805 (L805 OPU). Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beavers 51475 (M675 VJN), 51809 (P409 HPU) and Mercedes-Benz Vario/Marshall 52582 (V432 GTW) have been sold.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

Arrivals are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Plaxton Premiere 350 C53F 20417 (P177 NAK) ex-First Leicester, C49Ft 20418 (P176 NAK) ex-First Northampton and B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner 2 C44Ft 20457/64 (R813 HWS, X194 HFB) from the First Manchester rail support unit.

Fire-damaged Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34258 (N528 LHG) has been withdrawn. Withdrawals of Iveco TurboDaily minibuses continue with 52069/90, 52103 (L169 TRV, M190, 203 XTR). The last Iveco 59.12/Mellor, 52016 (K916 VDV), has gone to the City of Portsmouth Preserved Transport Depot.

First Leicester FG

Dennis Falcon 67614 (H614 EJF) has been reinstated unexpectedly and has appeared in all-day service. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Plaxton Premiere 20417 (P177 NAK) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

First London FG

The five additional articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro/AB49T for route 18 are ex-Mercedes demonstrator EA11000 (BX54 EBC) and ex-East London Group (formerly Stagecoach London) EA11066-9 (LV52 VFW-Z).

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/30F 34337 (H137 FLX) has gone to First Eastern Counties.

First Manchester FG

Despite the emphasis on single-deckers in recent years, 36 Volvo B9TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers are on order for next year.

More Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F are 69227/31/4-44 (MX56 AEU/Z, AFF/J/K/N/O/U/V/Y/Z, AGO/U), and not previously recorded are 69210/1/3 (MX06 VPL/M, YXS).

Scania L94UB/Wright Access-ultralow 60165/8 (S112/5 TNB) have gone to First Berkshire and Leyland Olympians 30235, 34333 (J155 YRM, H132 FLX) to First Eastern Counties.

The ex-First Glasgow Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders are for driver training, to replace former Shearings Leyland Tiger buses, of which 62258/9/62 (F37 ENF, G56 RND, F38 ENF) have gone to PVS (dealer), Carlton for scrap.

Withdrawals reported by the PSV Circle are of Volvo Citybus/Northern Counties 30347 (H708 GVM), Volvo

B6/Alexander Dash 40195 (N348 CJA), B6/Northern Counties 40198, 40200/57/12/6/47 (M251/3/60 NVM, M265/9 SVU, M103 RFRJ), Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 40258 (N626 CDB) and Dart/Plaxton Pointer 40294 (M963 XVT).

The Trafford Park rail support unit (managed on a First London operator licence) closed after service on 1 October. Scania K114IB/Irizar Century coaches 23016/8 (YNS4 APO/V) went to First Aircoach, Dublin in August, much travelled Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury 23126 (P26 RFS) and Scania K113CRB/Van Hool Alizée 62265 (ESK 257, N107 VKS) have gone to First Aberdeen, Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner 20457/64 (R813 HWS, X194 HFB) to First Hampshire & Dorset. Similar B10M-62 20461 (X191 HFB) is on loan to First Bristol and 20462/3 (X192/3 HFB) remain unallocated.

First Northampton FG

Three two-tone green Optare Solos for Connect Wellingborough services are 53071-3 (KX06 APV/Y/Z). Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde 67233 (L233 AAB) is here from First Wyvern and Volvo Olympian/Alexander RL-type 31455 (N966 SOS) from First Glasgow. Volvo B10M/Plaxton coach 20418 (P176 NAK) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

First Potteries FG

The company withdrew from operation of Merseytravel Eco service E1 from 2 September, thus rendering electric Gulliver Tecnobuses 50007-12 (S251-6 AFA) redundant.

Newcastle-under-Lyme garage has been given a stay of execution.

Just two Dennis Lances remained in use here in September, 60097/9. Sold for scrap are Leyland Olympians 30087/8 (D257/66 JVR), Dennis Darts 40047/75/81/2/4/94 (M380 SRE, J908/14/5/7 SEH, K927 XRF), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50069/76 (N412 HVT, P419 NFA), Leyland Tiger 60001 (G72 RND) and DAF SB220s 60016/7 (G252/53 JYG).

First Somerset & Avon FG

Two former London Dennis Lance SLF/Wright Pathfinders, 67316/7 (ODZ 8916/7), are in service at Bath, having been disused with First Wyvern for some time. They are now single-door.

The Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolynes displaced from Bath park-&-ride, 32709/11-7 (W709 RHT etc) are being transferred to First Devon & Cornwall; First to go were 32709/11/3/4.

First South Yorkshire FG

Volvo B9TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers are expected in 2007/08. A less new vehicle in service is ex-

First West Yorkshire Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 H49/29F 30878 (W733 DWX). Ex-London Volvo Olympian 34090 (T890 KLF) has been converted to single-door, expected to be H47/31F.

First Devon & Cornwall Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader 40448/80-6 (M918 MRW, N443 BKY, N144 BWG, N445-9 BKY) and 48141/2 (N441/2 BKY) are due to return during November, apart from two due next April. Also expected are all 15 of First's Volvo B10L/Wright Liberators from First Glasgow, 60350-4 (N557-9/61/2 BNF), 61483-8 (P188-3 UNS), 61520-3 (P761-4 XHS).

Olive Grove-based former Silver Service Volvo B10M/Alexander PSs 60471-81 (G626-36 NWA) are being used on new student-orientated Sheffield service 80.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 50192 (R125 XDT) has been reinstated. Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse 61198 (YU52 VXO) is in reserve.

Dennis Dominator/Alexander 30484/6, 30507 (C873/5 JWE, D480 OWE) have gone for scrap to PVS, Carlton (dealer), 30506 (D479 OWE) for preservation at Sandtoft. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 50218 (N271 JUG) was donated to South Yorkshire PTE for its Lifesize project.

First West Yorkshire FG

The first two Volvo 7LA/Wright StreetCar AB42D, 19012/3 (YJ06 XLR/S), were due to enter service in Leeds on service 4 in November. Following the experience in York, StreetCars will be introduced gradually as vehicles are ready for service, rather than all in one go. First Manchester Volvo B10LA 10009 (T510 JNA) has returned after use as a trainer at Bramley.

The latest Metro-owned BMC Condor 220/B57F schoolbuses are 68649-72 (YJ56 LJA/C/E/F/K/N/L, LLG/K/M-O, LNC/A, LKE, LJY/Z, LKA/C/D, LMX, LRU/N/L). Mercedes-Benz Vario O614D/O&H B13FL 0281 (W481 EUB) has been on loan from Leeds City Council, while KE03 JXU remains on loan from Dawsonrentals (dealer).

Red and cream MetroConnect-liveried Optare Solo M1020/B29F 53301-3 (YJ54 BVA-C) have been taken over from Pegasus, Guiseley.

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 37059 (YJ06 XML) was badly damaged in a spectacular single-vehicle accident on 25 September while operating service X6 (Bradford-Huddersfield). The driver and 33 passengers were injured after it left the road, crashed through a wall, a shop car park, grass embankment, hedge, high stone wall and halted in a garden. On the way, it dragged a lamp post with it and demolished a lock-up garage.

Scania N113DRB/Alexander H47/31F 31101/14 (H624/37 VNW) have returned from First Manchester. 31114 is in service, but 31101 was stripped for spares and sold for scrap. Similar 31083, 31000/12 (H806 TWX, H623/43 VNW) are also expected back for cannibalisation.

THE COACHPARC JAMES PRINCE profiles the Berkhof Radial, one of the rarest coaches of recent years

The Berkhof Radial is not a common vehicle, but can claim to be the first 2.55m wide coach body available in the UK. It replaced the low-floor Excellence and, available initially on the Dennis Javelin, there were plans to offer it on other chassis at some future stage. It complemented the high-floor Axial model launched a year earlier.

The Radial and Axial were imported by Bracknell-based AVE Berkhof, which was part of the Q Drive group (AVE stood for Alder Valley Engineering), so there was little surprise that the first Radial entered service with a Q Drive subsidiary, The Londoners, in February 1998.

Although Epsom Coaches ordered four Radials soon after the launch, sales were slow. Epsom proved to be the model's best customer with five operated. Single examples entered service with a few operators including Grey's of Ely, Gray's of Hoyland Common and Lothian. It was a competent body built to the usual standard expected of the Dutch manufacturer, but its conservative styling made it one of the least exciting coaches ever produced. The possibility of further chassis options never materialised and the collapse of Q Drive towards the end of 1998 didn't help.

Then there was the Modulo, a similar looking coach produced by Jonckheere, Berkhof's sister company. This was launched in the UK in 1998 with an impressive order from Stagecoach for interurban and articulated coaches based on the Volvo B10M. The Modulo was more often based on the rear engined Volvo B7R chassis and while sales have been steady, it has proved more popular than the Radial, which disappeared from Berkhof literature during 1999.



Above: Radial-bodied Javelin S995 TCF operating with Vince of Burghclere in August 2001, when it was picking up passengers in the Strand, London. **JOHN MARSH**

The reserve fleet — former Black Prince Scania N113DRBs 36923/9/32/5/6/46 (F423/9 GWG, H232/5/6/46 LOM) — was activated for a Robbie Williams concert on 8/9 September, but 36929 was withdrawn after suffering tree damage and was the first former Black Prince vehicle withdrawn. Ex-Black Prince 36924 (F424 GWG) has been repainted and is in use at Kirkstall.

BMC 1100FE yellow schoolbus 68501 (BU04 CAA) has gone to First Glasgow.

First Wyvern FG

Dennis Lance SLF/Wright Pathfinders 67316/7 (ODZ 8916/7) have entered service with First Somerset & Avon.

First York FG

Volvo B7L/Hispano Habit demonstrator BX03 OVZ has left after its two-year stint and has been acquired by Arriva Midlands. Wright Eclipse-bodied B7Ls 60912/26 (YG02 DLD, DGY) are in Park-&-Ride livery.

Fishwick, Leyland

More ex-Lothian Leyland Olympian ON2R56C13Z4/Alexander RH-type, G802/6 GSX, have been acquired.

Geldard, Leeds

Acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) in October were ex-Arriva Midlands Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties H47/33F G36 HKY and G711/4 LKW.

GHA, Corwen

Former Metrobus Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer R748 FGX and step-entrance N725 KGF have been acquired via Stafford Bus Centre (dealer), the SLF with accident damage. Former Arriva Cymru Mercedes-Benz Vario OB10/Mellor C33F R962 FYS is also in stock and will be refurbished before use. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile K367 TJF has been acquired from D. Jones, Rhos for cannibalisation.

Mercedes 709D G183 PAO is to be re-registered 553 UXP. Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander VX51 PZM is in green/purple/cream Traxx livery for service 111, Mini Pointer Dart V8 GHA being released from this in favour of Vale Rider scheme.

Leyland Olympian C613 ANW remains unused at the depot.

Glover, Ashbourne

A143 SCW is confirmed as a Volvo B58-56 new to Glenton, London as PYT 153R with a Duple Dominant 1 C38C body. It was rebodied in 1984 with a Plaxton Paramount 3200 C40F body, and re-registered A184 UJD at then, later becoming 6682 WY.

Go North East GA

On order for delivery between November and February are 41 new Scania OmniCity single-deckers for four new branded routes and nine Mercedes-Benz Citaros to replace ex-National Express Volvo B10M coaches on Red Arrows limited-stop services. All will have air conditioning.

The new buses and service rationalisation will lead to withdrawal of 140 buses, and all routes other than school services will require low-floor buses. Some low-floor buses will be withdrawn, including eight Dennis Trident/Plaxton Presidents destined for Oxford Bus Company, which had borrowed 3883 (NK51 UCL). The



Above: Go West Midlands 961 (R361 LGH), a Northern Counties Palatine II-bodied Volvo Olympian new to London General, in the double-deck version of the new Diamond livery. **TONY HUNTER**

future of Trident 3887 (NK51 UCP) is in doubt following severe fire damage while in service at Chester-le-Street.

Optare Solos 448/9/57/63/4 (S248/9 KNL, T457/63/4 BCN), allocated to Chester le Street, wear Pink Panther livery for new Durham City route D4 (Armsion Centre-City Centre), while VDL SB120/Wright Merit midibuses 8261/5/6 (NK04 NZC-E) have been painted in Highwayman green.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4756/57/60/1 (K756 SBB etc) and 4805 (J205 VHN) are withdrawn, while 4804/6 (J204/6 VHN) have passed, respectively, to Nadin, Beeding and Poynter, Wye. Dennis Dart/Marshall 8097, 8103 (M807/13 GFT) have been withdrawn again. Former OK Travel Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 8421 (M421 PVN) has gone to Tate, Stocksbridge, 8424/6/30 (M424 PVN, M426/30 RDC) to Trustline, Hunsdon, which also has Optare MetroRider 429 (P429 VRG). The North East Bus Preservation Trust has acquired Leyland National 2 former driver trainer 4710 (FTN 710W).

Go West Midlands GA

Centro tender losses reduced the peak vehicle requirement by about 30 from 22 October. All Mercedes-Benz minibuses are to be withdrawn from passenger service, though some are retained as crew buses. All Dennis Dart SLFs are to be painted in Diamond livery by the end of the year, and 21 surplus buses are being retained while this is done. After that, all step-entrance Darts and Dennis Lances will be withdrawn.

Further Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers are due from London Central/London General, including newly delivered P515 RYM, R458/66/73/5 LGH, as well as Volvo B10Bs from Oxford.

Goodsir, Holyhead

Optare Solo SlimLine M780SL/B25F YJ55 ELZ was bought new but is previously unreported. Leyland

Olympian/ECW C261 UAJ is a recent acquisition from Arriva North East, supplementing ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobuses ROX 614/67Y and A103 WVP.

Griffiths, Y Felin Heli, Gwynedd

A clutch of ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3s operates in the shape of AHU 512V, BMA 521W, PFC 513W, YMB 509W and DCA 525X.

Halton Transport

Leyland Lynxes are appearing in service more frequently following the sale of Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 1-4, 90 (R712-4 MEW, S196 FFM, R410 XFL) after contract losses. 1 and 90 are with Rossendale Transport, 2 and 3 with D&G, Longton and 4 with Countryliner, Guildford.

Ham, Flimwell, E Sussex

The second Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Olympus double-decker is coming here after exhibition at Euro Bus Expo. ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians A9, 16/7 ALS (C205-7 GTU) and DAF/Van Hool MIL 9765 have been sold.

Harris, Blackwood

Optare Solo M850/B29F YJ55 YHD/E were bought new, following YK04 KVX/Z, previously unreported.

Hayton, Burnage, Manchester

This operator has won the contracts for Greater Manchester PTE service 54 (Hulme-Longsight) from First Manchester, 267 (Altrincham-Partington) from Arriva Manchester and 278 (Trafford General Hospital-Stretford) from Bluebird, Middleton. There are four ex-Arriva North West/Blue Bus/Nottingham Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F for these, 28-31 (R229/8/6/7 SCH).

White Scania/Berkhof YN06 TFY has been operating the Britannia Hotels contract. Scania N113DRB/East Lancs P102 HNC has passed to Red Kite, St Helens.

Below: MX56 AAK, the Red Gem-branded Plaxton Primo that Grant Palmer is operating in Luton. **SIMON AYRES**



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

Hedingham Omnibuses

An Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-decker is due next March. ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3s L168/94 (PWY 43W, JWW 271W) have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Holloway, Scunthorpe

Another ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander (Belfast) H47/33F is H538 JBJ (90 D 1050) from Chambers, Bures. DAF SB220/Northern Counties Paladin B49F P907/8 PWW have been acquired from Uno, Hatfield, and also Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 350 C48F T533 EUB.

Four of the five Dennis Javelins have been sold, PSV 426 (M162 KAT) and 100 FH (M887 WAK) having regained their original registrations before sale.

Howells, Bargoed

Leyland Atlanteans still here are Alexander-bodied MVK 521R, SCN 266/73S, PIW 4791 (SCN 276S), YJI 1310 (VCU 304T), AVK 143/52/66V, EJH 106/23W, GSC 638/57X plus East Lancs-bodied WRN 134/7V and KCK 201W. Another increasingly uncommon type is Duple 425 coach MUI 5882 (G38 OHS).

Hulley, Baslow

New Mercedes-Benz-engined Optare Solo SlimLine M780SL/B28F 10 (MX56 ACF) entered service on 28 October.

Hunt, Alford, Lincs

Former Trent Barton Optare Excel V210 ENU has been acquired and converted to run on vegetable oil.

Ipswich Buses

The Scania OmniCitys were expected in late-October/early November and are due into service on the 13 (Tower Ramparts-Copdock Tesco) in early December. An option on three OmniCity double-deckers has been cancelled.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta H180 HPV has been sold to Venture Bus Sales and was advertised on eBay.

Islwyn Borough Transport

Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere C50F 76 (P60 PSW, P357 VWR) was acquired ex-Paul Winson, Loughborough in August, when the remains of Leyland Tiger/East Lancs B47F went to Evans, Bargoed for scrap. The Volvo's registration is being returned to Winson.

Jackson, Blackpool

Scania/Irizar S-Kool C70F YN56 FGA is new.

Paul James, Hugglescote, Leicestershire

Optare Solo M950 YJ06 YRX is in use in a silver livery on the new Oakham Hopper service launched by Rutland County Council, branded for three circular routes around Britain's smallest county town.

Johnson, Hodthorpe, Derbyshire

FJ56 HLN, a new Iveco Daily 45C14/Excel M16, arrived in September.

As the Bristol VRT/SL3 begins to fade, ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians are taking their place, with H45/32F-bodied ONLXB/1Rs A530-2 OKH, B533/4 WAT and C536 DAT from East Yorkshire and H45/32F-bodied ONCL10/1RVs C658/61 LJR from Nightingale, Greencroft. VRT/SL3 LVL 809V has been withdrawn after accident damage.

Work continues on the restoration of ex-Gash, Newark 1944 Bedford OWB/Duple GAL 967, its utility body having been shipped to Cobus at Bridlington for attention.

JP Travel, Middleton

Fire-damaged Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer T76 WWV has been advertised for sale on eBay.

K Line, Honley, Huddersfield

New is B12F Optare Alero YJ56 ARO in MetroConnect livery — like other vehicles in the fleet, it has a DAF badge on the front. Also in MetroConnect livery, for a new free town service in Huddersfield, are Mercedes-Benz-engined Optare Solos YJ56 WFH/K.

Kimes, Folkingham, Lincs

The first low-floor double-decker here is Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 ex-demonstrator V929 FMS, previously used by Accord at Portsmouth University. It is for service 19 (Peterborough-Oakham) at school times.



Above: Plymouth Citybus marked the end of 46 years of Leyland Atlantean operation with a running day on 15 October, when it handed over East Lancs-bodied 171 (TTT 171X) — the last example in service — to the Plymouth City Transport Preservation Group. Here it stands alongside the group's restored Metro-Cammell-bodied 201 (DDR 201C) and Roe-bodied 131 (STK 131T) in Bretonside bus station. **CHRIS CARTER**

Ex-Claribel's Optare Excel V394 KVV has become 302 (DAZ 4302). DAF SB220/Optare Delta 19 (PAZ 9319) has been sold locally to Tudor, Stamford.

Kinchbus WG

Two vehicles are outstationed at First Leicester, usually Leyland Olympian 720 (C720 NNN) and Dennis Dart SLF 925 (R925 RAU).

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beavers 285/9 (S285/9 UAL) passed to Cedar, Bedford, but 288 (S288 UAL) has been branded for University service 7.

Kingsley, Birtley, Tyne & Wear

A new MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution single-decker here is 104 (AE56 LWN).

King Travel, Accrington

As reported in News last month, this is the new trading name for Pilkington's following the regaining of an operator licence and the launch of a new Accrington-Blackburn service. Acquired for this from East Yorkshire are Optare Excel L1150/B45F S289/91 RAG.

Laser Travel, Thurcroft, S Yorks

Mercedes-Benz Touro/Caetano LX03 KPAJ are at work, while Mercedes B884 WNB, Volvo B10M/Plaxton coaches L940/1 NWW and M714 MRU (A6 EXC) have been sold.

Little, Ilkeston

Optare Solo MX04 VLV has replaced former Nottingham Optare Metrorider R232 SCH on service 9 (Derby-Borrowash).

London Central/London General GA

This operator looks set to be the first to use Dennis Tridents as driver trainers. LOTS reports that PDL1-13 (X601-9, 701, 611-3 EGK) will be converted to replace NV-class Volvo Olympians.

Acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is former Arriva the Shires & Essex driver trainer ADZ 4731 (KNP 3X), a Volvo B10M-56/Plaxton Viewmaster IV Express coach.

Dennis Dart LDP16 (P516 RYM) has been on loan to recently acquired subsidiary Docklands Minibus, while LDP15, 58, 66, 73/5 (P515 RYM, R458/66/73/5 LGH) have gone to Go West Midlands.

London Heritage Travel, Southend

AEC Routemasters JJD 588D and SMK 714F are in stock, kept on the premises of revitalised Supreme Travel (now Greenhill Travel rather than Abridge Enterprises). JJD 588D is one of just two Routemasters that retain illuminated offside advertising panels.

Low Fell, Gateshead

Optare Solo M920/B29F MX03 YCZ and CE52 UWW, the latter from Bebb, Llantwit Fardre, are being used on recently gained service 106 (Newcastle-Walker). Dennis Dart SLF/UVG P844 KOT has been sold to Trustline, Hunsdon.

M Travel, Normanton

MCW Metrobus Mk2 DR102/27/H43/30F A697 UOE is an acquisition.

M&S Minibuses, Nottingham

Former Preston Leyland Lynx G214 KRN is a recent acquisition.

Malcolm's Blue Bus, Clacton

Former Colchester Leyland Atlantean/ECW TPU 68R only stayed for two weeks before going to Jordan, Coltishall (dealer) for scrap. Its engine and gearbox passed to Carter, Wherstead.

Manchester Community Transport, Wythenshawe

A yellow Irisbus Scolabus/Vehixel for a Greater Manchester PTE school contract is FX56 AEW.

Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent

Former Gash Bedford YLQ/Plaxton Supreme III B30 (RAU 624R) has been withdrawn.

MASS, North Anston

After a long spell out of use, Optare MetroRider midibus M927 TYG returned service at Fittingley, repainted in the new green MASS-Leon livery. Leyland Titan KYV 513X has been sold to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Mayne, Manchester

Scania N112DRB/East Lancs 12 (C112 UBC) has been re-registered NIB 3162.

McEwen, Mansfield

Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer coaches here are yellow N976 THE and white N602 CVP. Also acquired are Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32D A630/1 WDT, while single-door TSO 12/3X are from Wilson, Market Harborough as a source of spares.

Menyn, Llanrwst

Mercedes-Benz 711D P740 UWW is an acquisition for service 75 (Llanfairfechan-Llandudno).

Merseypride, Bootle

Leyland Olympian/ECW JWR 150Y (SHE 619Y) is being cannibalised.

Metrobus GA

Withdrawn are Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 381-9/91-3 (Y381 HKE etc).

Metroline DG

The Alexander Dennis Enviro400s expected in late-November will be TE712-23 (LK56 FHE-H/J/M-P/R-T) for Holloway.

The balance of the ex-Centra Dennis Darts was in stock by 2 September and a further five being acquired from Southdown PSV (dealer) are DP28, 36-8, 49 (WGW 128T etc) for allocation to Armchair, allowing hired Blue Triangle Darts to go on further loan to Transdev London.

Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital DML519/25-32 (R619 VEG etc) have been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet, but DML519/27 are currently in Ensign's own operational fleet.

Midland Choice, Swadlincote

Prototype MCW Metrobus TOJ 592S is at work here, noted on service 21 (Swadlincote-Burton-upon-Trent). Latterly with Skylark, South Boxall, it entered service in as-withdrawn Arriva colours, but has been repainted into 1970s-style London Transport red with white upper-deck window surrounds.

Midland Classic, Church Gresley, Derbyshire

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus K559 PDY (NDZ 3020) has been acquired from Midland Rider, Oldbury. Leyland Titan WDA 4T is out of service.

Midland General **WG**

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver 821 (N821 RFP) has been transferred from Trent Barton for service 146 (Sutton Junction-Sutton bus station), with Midland General fleetnames on Kinchbus blue/yellow livery.

Midland Glowbelle, West Bromwich

Former MoD Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Derwent NUI 7689 (D249 TUU) is acquired from People's Express.

Morris, Carmarthen

Alexander Dennis Enviro300/B54F schoolbus demonstrator SN55 HSF has been on loan and was used on summer Beacons Bus service B10 (Carmarthen-Brecon).

Mountain Goat, Windermere

Renault Master/Mellor B16FL Y259/69 KJA have come from TLS, Salford. Optare Alero YN03 ZWK has gone to Abacab Reisen, Llanfairfechan.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians A630/1 WDT have gone to McEwen, Mansfield.

Mulley, Ixworth, Suffolk

Leyland Olympian/ECW ACM 712X has been sold to Anglia American Limos and the Bristol VRT owned, ECW-bodied PJ1 5526 (URF 671S) is to become a mobile home at Long Melford.

National Express **NX**

New Volvo B12B/Caetano Levantes are NXVC5-9, 11 (FJ06 URH, GKG, FH06 URG, FN06 FMC, FH06 EAW, FN06 FMA). Former Travel Dundee Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragons SP04 HRLM, ST52 GZD/E are numbered NXVP1-4.

Hotel Hoppa Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusaders P227/33/47/8/50 AAP carry overall advertisements for Heathrow Bus Station.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere M723 KPD is now a driver trainer and is not to be sold as expected, but former Skill's DAF SB3000/Premiere N21 ARC, Volvo B10M/Premieres N40, 50, 60, 70, 90 SLK and ex-NCP Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beavers K1-4 NCP have been sold. Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima 1165-8 (W922-4/6 WCD) have gone to Bus Éireann.

Network Colchester **TGM**

Dennis Dart/Caetano Nimbus 994/6/8 (X194/6/8 FOR) and Optare Solo 300 (W427 CWX) have left after a short stay here, and have left. Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 905 (W905 UJM) has returned after a short stay at Haverhill. Mercedes-Benz Varios 723/4 (R763 DUB, R174 VBM) have also left Colchester.

Newport Transport

Eighteen new Scania OmniCity single-deckers are on order for delivery in batches of six over each of the next three years. After a period on long-term loan, former Plymouth Leyland Atlantean open-topper ATK 154W has returned to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Nottingham City Transport

Scania N230/East Lancs Esteem demonstrator YN06 TGE has been in use, temporarily numbered 600.

Heavy withdrawals to report are of Volvo Citybus/East Lancs Pyoneer 341-5 (R341-5 RRA), Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneer 479/80 (R479/80 RRA), Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 604/11/4/5 (M604 TTV, N611 XVO, N614/5 YRA) and B10B/Plaxton Verde 605-7 (N605-7 UTU); Scania L113/East Lancs Flyte 640-2 (P640-3 ENN) and Volvo B10M/Alexander PS 767-71 (N767-71

WRC). Also withdrawn is Scania N113DRB double-deck driver trainer 860 (G879 TVS), which was new as a Scania demonstrator. Optare Excel 2s are to be used as driver trainers.

Notts & Derby **WG**

Unibus Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 363-70 (N363-70 VRC) are reported sold, with similar-vintage Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladins repainted green/white/grey to cover for them, first being 138 (M138 PRA). B10B 127 (L127 LRA) is rebranded with Local Bus fleetnames for Nottingham area shoppers' services but 118 (L118 LRA) has been delicensed.

The dedicated City Hospital car park bus, Optare Excel 209 (V209 ENU), was taken out of service upon expiry of its MoT, and replaced by Trent Dove Holes-dedicated 208 (V208 ENU). After a period stored, former Trent Barton Rainbow 5-liveried Excel 161 (S161 UAL) has entered service at Derby on the Mackworth College shuttle, replacing Excel 153 (P153 CTU), taken out of service.

Oakwood, Appleton

In from Allander, Milngavie are former Lothian Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2R/ECW H50/34F OFS 690/1Y.

Ogden, St Helens

Ex-Go North East DAF SB220/Optare Delta J201 VHN is in use on service 14 (Haydock-Prescot), with Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers L315 XBB and M814 HCU from the same source. SB220/East Lancs Mylennium W266 CDN is also in use.

Recently acquired Optare Excels have languished unused, V393 KVV having been stripped. Former Merseybus Dennis Dominator ALZ 8167 remains at the depot out of use, while Mercedes-Benz L452 JEE has passed to Red Kite.

Olympian, Harlow

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer K714 KGU has been withdrawn.

Owens, Four Crosses

Former Ipswich Buses Optare MetroRider MR17/B29F M215 EDX, latterly with Country Bus, Newton Abbot, has been acquired and wears a non-standard cream and navy blue livery as a reserve vehicle for the Welshpool town service, normally the preserve of Irisbus LoGo/Unvi DX55 PKO.

Short-lived Marshall Minibus P460 EFL has appeared with Watson's Ayr Park at Prestwick Airport.

Oxford Bus Company **GA**

Following the loan of Go North East Dennis Trident/Plaxton President 3883 (NK51 UCL), eight similar buses are due from the same source to increase capacity on route 35 (Abingdon-Didcot). They will be in a double-deck version of red City livery and will be numbered in the 9xx series reserved for vehicles too high to pass under Oxford station bridge.

Grant Palmer, Dunstable

New for Luton Red Gem services is B28F Plaxton Primo MX56 AAK.

Parry, Cheslyn Hay, Staffs

New YN06 FWF is believed to be the last tri-axle Neoplan Starliner N516SHD/C44F for the UK.

Pegasus, Guiseley, W Yorks

Operation of MetroConnect Optare Solos YJ54 BVA-C has transferred to First West Yorkshire, for service 737 (Bradford-Airport).

Peterborough City Council

New are BMC 1100FE/B55FL 591-3 (BX56 XBF/G/D) for contracts between North Cambridgeshire villages and Arthur Mellows Village College at Gilton.

Rohill-bodied Renault Masters are used on new services 402/404 (Peterborough-Stamford), marketed as Village Link, and previously worked by Bettacres, Peterborough.

Plymouth Citybus

The three new Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts are registered WA56 HHN-P.

Preston Bus

Long wheelbase Optare Solos 81-3 (PE55 WMD/F/G), new last January, are being repainted in the new livery for use on the Orbit route.

Four Leyland Lynxes have been sold, leaving 211/3/6 (F211/3 YHG, G216 KRN) awaiting buyers. 210 (F210 YHG) is with Scotbus, Inverness, where it rejoins several ex-Preston Leyland Atlanteans, while 217 (G217 KRN) went to Tate, Wombwell. Optare MetroRiders 11/5/6 (P411/5/6 TFR) have gone to Thomson Group, Glasgow.

Quantock Motor Services, Taunton

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties Paladin DP42F 33 (K33 GOW) has been acquired from Whittle, Kidderminster.

Reading Transport

The first six of the new red-liveried Scania OmniCity/B41F for the Vodafone shuttle services, 6-11 (YN56 FAA/F/J/K/M/O), entered service at Newbury on 23 October. Scania retained 12 (YN56 FAU) temporarily for further development work.

Vehicles released from Vodafone work have been dispersed. Optare Solos 120/1 (Y594/5 HPK) have moved to the Newbury Buses local bus fleet, where they have displaced the last two Optare MetroRiders, 630/1 (T553/4 ADN). Optare Excel 942 (V942 DCF) and TransBus Enviro300s 970-3 (KV03 ZGK-N) have returned to dealers off lease, 970-3 being released one week early, with former Thames Valley Park Excel 2s 961-4 (X961-4 BPA) temporarily plugging the gap at Newbury; 963 remained for a few days pending delivery of OmniCity 12.

Excel 2s 961-4 will be repainted into a new generic livery of silver (in place of charcoal) and beige with a non-silver swoosh, which will also be applied to golden jubilee VDL DB250/Optare Spectra 723 (YJ51 ZVG). Solo 123 (YG02 FVW) is the third bus repainted in the new Newbury Buses cream/light green livery.

The Wrightbus hybrid double-decker shown at Euro Bus Expo will visit Reading in December to be shown to the local authorities, developers and councillors as a future propulsion method to assist with the reduction of Reading Transport's carbon footprint.

Reay, Wigton, Cumbria

Bova Futuras S50 TPB and T50 TPB are re-registered USU 641 and TFO 532 respectively, while ex-Shearings Volvo B10M/Jonckheere USU 641 has reverted to R941 YNF. B10M/Van Hool J207 NNC and B10M/Jonckheere R28 XAO have gone to Caldew, Dalston, Bova SG52 XKE to Edwards. Hailsham and Scania/Van Hool EJZ 7243 to Focus, Much Hoole.

Redby, Sunderland

Former East Thames Optare Excels P322 KAR, P325/9 NHJ are numbered 322/5/9 and used on South Tyneside College services 501/2. 322 carries a green-based overall advertising scheme for the college, 329 a blue version.

Red Kite, St Helens

Additions are former Stagecoach Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F L831/2 CDG and Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B40F K578 NHC. Further acquisitions are Scania N113DRB/East Lancs H45/31F P102 HNC from Hayton, Burnage, ex-Trent Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F N215 VRC and, from Ogden, St Helens comes Mercedes-Benz 410D/Crystals B16F L452 JEE.

Optare Solo MX04 VLN has returned to Mistral Bus & Coach (dealer) off hire.

Red Route Buses, Northfleet

An AEC Routemaster acquired via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, is RML888 (255 UXO, WLT 888).

Left: Reading Transport 6 (YN56 FAA), one of the new Euro4-engined Scania OmniCity single-deckers for the Vodafone staff bus service contract in Newbury. **JOHN MARSH**



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

Renown, Bexhill

Ex-Brighton & Hove Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer acquired via Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) are B40D M65/8 CYJ and B38D M97 BWB. Also acquired is ex-Arriva London (new to Kentish Bus) Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/31F G541 VBB.

Richard Bros, Cardigan

TransBus Enviro300/B44F former demonstration bus PO54 NNM has been in use, numbered 010.

Roberts, Liverpool

This operator has acquired Marshall Minibus P406 KAV.

Rossendale Transport

Ex-Halton Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 12 (R712 MEW) is now in schoolbus yellow. The ex-Munro, Jedburgh Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200s are 163-6 (X463-6 UKS). They are receiving red, cream and white Easyride livery for service 464 (Accrington-Rochdale), on which they have replaced Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s 131-4 (X131-4 JCW).

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Derwent 66 (G728 JJC) has been renumbered 18. As they exceed the age limit for Greater Manchester PTE contracts, former Lothian Leyland Lynx 2s 177-9/81-5 (H177-9/81-5 OSG) face imminent disposal.

Running Footman, Martlesham, Suffolk

A second Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW acquired is former County, Brentwood KKK 887V, new to Maidstone & District.

SBC, Southend

Scania OmniDekka part open-topper B16 YBC — dubbed *The Big Yellow Bus* — has been advertised for sale.

Selwyn, Runcorn

New for National Express service 060 (Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds) are Volvo B12B/Caetano Levante C49FLt 113-6 (FH06 EBO, FG56 PAO, PBF/O).

Former Harding's vehicles numbered are 23 (Y152 TVV), 33/5/6/9 (T742 JHE, R880/90 SDT, L403 LHE), 42/3/6/7 (R10, 20 OAH, P10 OAH, T741 JHE) and 50/1 (M232 XEO, N206 VRX). Volvo B10M/Plaxton R71/2 ECA have gone to Swan, Lydiat Ash, R73 KCA to Volvo, Loughborough (dealer).

Shamrock, Abercynon VE

Leyland Lynxes F283/94 AWW, J376 AWT and J379 BWU finally entered service from Barry on school duties while another two from Arriva Yorkshire are H393 WWY and J365 YWX, stored at Newport. Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus K984 CBO has returned to service.

Iveco EuroMidi/Indcar Maxim midcoaches S397 SKK, T2 ATS and Mercedes-Benz minicoach V612 FAW are withdrawn.

Following the Veolia takeover, vehicles have appeared with Bebb Travel legal lettering.



Above: One of the first signs of Veolia's takeover of Shamrock Group is the application of Bebb Travel legal lettering. Unfortunately, these vinyls omit a letter 'R' from Llantwit Fardre. **STEVE POWELL**

Silverline, Solihull

YN06 JFX is a new Mercedes-Benz 1523L/Unvi Touring.

Simonds, Botesdale, Suffolk

Acquired are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B37F T459 HNH, Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool Alizée T8 C57F JUI 4236 (A767 UHT), the latter from Riches, Stratbrooke.

Solent Blue Line GA

A notable new addition is 758 (SN56 AWX), the first Volvo B7TL with an Alexander Dennis Enviro400 body. It may also be the last, as Euro4 production vehicles will be on the Volvo B9TL. It was intended for Wilts & Dorset but is too high for its operations.



Above and inset: Stagecoach East and Bedfordshire County Council have relaunched two Bedford town services as BlueSolos using a fleet of largely new Optare Solos in the two-tone blue livery seen on 47440 (YJ56 AOP) and on the rear of 47438 (YJ56 AON). **TIM CARTER**

Stagecoach East ST

Bedfordshire County Council Optare Solos 47435 (YN53 SVV), 47436-42 (YJ56 AOL-P/R/S) are being operated on new BlueSolos-branded Bedford town services 3, 4 and 8, which replaced routes 104 and 108 from 23 October. They are in a two-tone blue and white version of Stagecoach corporate livery.

Due imminently are Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 35218-26 (KX56 JVV/Z, JZA/C-H) for Northampton service 16 (Town Centre-Ecton Brook) and Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile C51FL 53271-6 (KX56 JZJ-N/D), initially to be used on Virgin Trains service VT99 (Milton Keynes-Luton Airport). Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash DP40F 32002-4/6-8 (P102-4 NNN, P450-2 KRP) have been transferred from Stagecoach Warwickshire.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 40339 (M339 DRP) has been written off. Leyland Olympian 14036 (F636 YRP) has been cannibalised; not often will vehicles then serve another purpose, but Bedfordshire Police used it to stage a mock robbery, during which all its windows were smashed.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Former Stagecoach London Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H51/22D 17039-47/62/3 (S839 BWC, T640-7/62/3 KPU) have entered service at Hull, converted to H51/26F.

Leyland Olympian 14335 (C335 HWJ) is the last vehicle remaining in service that was new to East Midlands. Newer Hull-based Olympians 14339/41 (G339/41 KKW) have been withdrawn to reserve. Also in reserve are Mercedes-Benz Varios 42578/9/82/3/5/7/9 (T58 KLG, T38 PTG, T582/3/5/7/9 SKG).

Dennis Trident 18121 (YN04 KGE) has been delicensed after accident damage.

Stagecoach Lincolnshire ST

Renault Master/Whitacre 48106 (BX06 VHL) is on extended loan from Lincolnshire County Council at Gainsborough. Further Volvo Olympian YN2RC16V3/Alexander DPH47/28F from Stagecoach South East are 16346-8 (N346-8 MPN).

Back in service are MCW Metrobus 15949 (POG 480Y), Dennis Darts 32111 (K211 SRH), 32419/20/3/5/6 (N419 MBW etc).

Delicensed are DAF SB220 26038 (H393 SYG), Leyland Tiger 25812 (JUI 3463), Dennis Darts 33206/15 (R506 MFE, V515 XTL) and Metrobus 15974 (POG 547Y). Metrobus 15965 (POG 518Y) has gone for scrap.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Alexander Dennis Enviro400s 19066-8/71-81 (MX56 FSV/Y/Z, FTD-F/K/N-P-T-V/Y) had arrived by mid-October. Alexander Dennis Tridents 18376-9/85-8 (MX55 KRG/J/K/N, KSJ/K/N/O) have been cascaded to Cheltenham & Gloucester while TransBus Tridents 17705-8 (ML02 RWV, KCU, RWW/X) are more for Devon.

Ex-London Dennis Dart SLFs 34114/6 (V114/6 MVX) are still being prepared for service. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban 52248 (M948 TSX) has received training livery. Mercedes-Benz Varios 42002, 42537/46/69-72 (R502 YWC, P537/46 PNE, R446/7 YNF, R899/8 AVN) are in reserve. Leyland Olympians 13304, 13502/6 (F304 DRJ, C160/70 HBA) have been sold.

Soul, Olney, Bucks

Notable secondhand double-deck acquisitions from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) are of H657 PVW (EN 5923), a Dennis Condor DDA1809/Duple Metsec H53/40D ex-New World First Bus, Hong Kong, and H658 PVW (91 D 1072), a Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4/Alexander (Belfast) RH-type H47/27D ex-Dublin Bus.

Southern Vectis GA

Additions to the fleet are former Brighton & Hove Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F M73/6/8 CYJ. They were new to Brighton Blue Bus. Ten Optare MetroRiders are expected from Wilts & Dorset for the winter timetable.

Bristol VRT operation was expected to finish at the end of September, bringing the sad conclusion to many decades of the once all-conquering Bristol/ECW marques on the Isle of Wight.

South Lancs, Atherton

Dennis Dart SLFs 95/6/8 (X195/6/8 FOR) are here from Burton, Haverhill.

South Yorkshire, Ackworth, Pontefract

Acquired are Volvo B10M-46 (B9M)/Jonckheere C35F 01 (C404 LRP) from Dawes, Heydon and EOS/C53Ft 02 (XIL 6961, H448 VHM) from Buckwood School, Greeting.

Another ex-Stagecoach Merseyside Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus is 201 (K381 RTY), while from the same source are 207/9 (M679/80 SSX), Volvo B6-50/Alexander Dash B40F named *Sheila* and *Mary* respectively.

Withdrawn are Leyland National Greenway 200 (NIW 6508, GUA 821M), Dennis Falcons 201/2 (G310 DPA, G388 EKA) and Optare MetroRider 203 (K449 YCW, K300 LC7), the MetroRider passing to Denny, Cudworth. Also disposed of are all the Leyland Olympians, 100-5 (B87, 95 SJA, B124 TVU, B143 WNB, B147 XNA, B662 CET), 102 passing to Cotton, Bickerstaffe, 103 to Alpine, Llandudno for open-top conversion and 105 to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

St Ives Bus Company

Mercedes-Benz B11D/Marshall C16 DP33F L858 COD is here from Dartline, Exeter.

Stagecoach Devon ST

TransBus Trident/ALX400 H51/28F 17705-8 (ML02 RWV, KCU, RWW/X) have been transferred in from Stagecoach Manchester.

Stagecoach North East ST

Leyland Olympians 14191/4 (H191/4 WFR), Scania N113CRBs 28908/17/21/3/36 (F908/17 JRG, G921/3 TCU, H436 EFT) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40469/83/4 (N469 RVK etc) have been withdrawn to reserve. Dennis Darts 32634/7/8, 32735-9 (P634/7/8 PGP, L735-9 VNL) have moved from Busways to Darlington.

Volvo B10M/Northern Counties 20243-5 (M543-5 SPY) are at Walkergate for refurbishment. As reported in News last month, a Caterpillar engine has been installed in Volvo Olympian/Alexander 16730 (N730 LTN).

Stagecoach North West ST

The last three National Express diagrams ceased in mid-November.

Stagecoach Oxfordshire ST

Optare Solo SlimLine 47363 (KX06 AZD) is used on services 17/A, allowing Stagecoach Devon's 47106 (WA04 TXX) to move on to Stagecoach Warwickshire.

Stagecoach South East Leyland Olympian/Alexander 13646/52 (H463/2 EJR) were on loan to cover for Oxford Tube Neoplan double-decker coaches having air-conditioning units rectified, after hot weather this summer had caused problems, and their toilet units are having revised pumping arrangements.

All Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PSs are based at Oxford following transfer of 20542/3. Just two Mercedes-Benz 709Ds remain, 40653 as a staff bus and 40172 in reserve.

Stagecoach South East ST

Leyland Olympians 13646/52 (H463/2 EJR) have returned from loan to Stagecoach Oxford Tube. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds are now only at Canterbury/Herne Bay and Deal areas.

Volvo Olympians 16346-8 (N346-8 MPN) have passed to Stagecoach Lincolnshire.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

New Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts for Leamington are 35175-85 (KX56 KHA/B/C, KGG/J/K/N/O/U/V/Y) — the first having a registration reminiscent of Midland Red's Warley HA marks. Ex-London Dennis Dart SLFs 34111/2 (V173/12 MVX) are in service at Nuneaton.

Dennis Dart SLFs 32002-4/6-8 (P102-4 NNH, P450-2 KRP) have gone from Nuneaton to Stagecoach East, and Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PSs 20417/23 (H617/23 ACK) have gone to Stagecoach Yorkshire. Mercedes-Benz 709D 40163 (N363 AVV) is withdrawn at Leamington.

Stagecoach Wales ST

Optare Solo M850/B27F 47389/90 (SV56 BVO/P) have been diverted from Stagecoach Bluebird.

Withdrawn are Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-type 20707 (K707 DAO); Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40579/81 (N379/81 PWY) and 40643 (N643 VSS), together with Mercedes 811D/Marshall 41332 (M615 XLG).

Notably, this descendant of Red & White has withdrawn from the Newport-Caerwent-Chepstow section of service 73 (Newport-Gloucester), having run between the two towns since 1927. The service now operates only between Chepstow and Gloucester. Drake, Blaina has taken over the Newport-Chepstow section.

Stagecoach West ST

Transferred from Stagecoach Manchester to Cheltenham & Gloucester are Alexander Dennis Trident/Alexander Dennis



Above: Tanat Valley 250 (YJ56 ATU), the first of three new Optare Tempos for the cross-border Llanidloes-Shrewsbury service. **CHRIS CLEGG**

ALX400 H47/28F 18376-9/85-8 (MX55 KRG/J/K/N, KSJ/K/N/O), new in 2006. Allocated to Gloucester, these will enable service 10 (Lower Tuffley/Gloucester-Cheltenham) to be completely double-deck operated.

More mundane transfers from Swindon & District to Cheltenham & Gloucester are Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32319 (N319 AMG) and Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200,33947 (V947 DFH).

Mercedes-Benz 711D 41171 (P171 TNY) has been delicensed and placed in reserve, while 1993 Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall B33F 41803/6 (L803/6 XDG) have both been sold to Stafford Bus (dealer), Cotes Heath. Volvo B6/Alexander 30712 (L712 FWO) has gone to an unknown buyer.

Swindon & District Super Pointer Dart 33505 (W805 VDD) has lost its service 49 branding on repaint. Former Dukes Travel DAF SB220/Hispano B66F 26070 (G24 CLE, CAP 11, G247 CLE, TIB 395T) is currently being used for driver training.

Further to last month, Mercedes-Benz Varios 42586/8 (T586/8 SKG) came from Stagecoach Oxford to replace the ex-Yorkshire MetroRiders, as reported in September Fleet News, although Stagecoach Wales acquired them from Phil Anslow.

Stagecoach Yorkshire ST

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS B51F 20417/23 (H617/23 ACK) have been transferred to Barnsley from Stagecoach Warwickshire. Volvo B6/East Lancs 30151 (M630 NAC) and DAF SB220/Optare Delta 26046 (J322 BVO) have been reinstated at Barnsley.

Withdrawn to reserve are Dennis Darts 32191/4/9 (J403/6 XHL, L4 YTB), while SB220/Optare Delta 26042 (J314 BVO) and Volvo Citybus B10M-55/East Lancs 15215 (E735 HFW) have been withdrawn, the latter having suffered engine failure while drafted on to Megabus work, to which 15214-7 (E734-7 HFW) are apparently to be re-allocated, from Rugby.

Dennis Darts 32481/8/96 (K407/14 EWA, L422 KET) and MCW Metrobuses 15875 and accident damaged 15935 (D705 NKY, NOA 440X) have been scrapped.

In general terms, former Yorkshire Traction and Barnsley & District operations still do not use corporate Stagecoach fleetnumbers.



Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

Having standardised on the Leyland Olympian for schools work, the fleet is being upgraded with acquisition of Volvo Olympians and, most recently, Scania N113DRB/East Lancs G725-9 RYJ from Brighton & Hove.

Suffolk County Council

Alexander Dennis Enviro300 SN06 BOK is based at Lowestoft.

Tanat Valley, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Moer

250-2 (YJ56 ATU/V/X) are Optare Tempo X1200/B42F for Powys County Council service 775 (Llanidloes-Shrewsbury), which this operator took over on 30 October. MAN 18.220/Marcopolo Viale B42F demonstrator PL05 TCO has been on trial, temporarily numbered 250.

Ex-Stagecoach East Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H45/30F 550 (F508 NJE) has been acquired for the Oswestry town service.

Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Deauville C53F 402 (K2 TGE, K845 HUM) has been acquired from Longmynd, Pontesbury, similar 471 (WIB 7192, G695 SSB, 191 WHW, G178 RBD) from Weir, Clydebank and similar but C51Ft 435 (CNZ 1535, M28 FBC, 95 G 2085) and 494 (L94 GAX) from Sherwood, Immingham.

Volvo B10M 384 (SJL 1884, TNP 615Y) has been withdrawn. Disposals are of Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess 104 (F404 KOD) and 195 (F995 DRN, XFK 305, F95 VBV) to Next Bus, Chippenham; Leyland Tiger/Duple Laser 305 (B405 UOD) to a Devon-based preservationist; Bedford YNV/Duple Laser 334 (D734 LAX) to Country Bus, Newton Abbot; Dennis Javelin/Marcopolo 492 (N792 SJL) to Wilkins, Cymmer and Leyland Olympian/Alexander 547 (A47 FRS) to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

After cannibalisation, the remains of prototype Leyland Swift/Wadham Stringer E566 JFR were scrapped on-site. After being stolen from Llanrhaeadr depot and burnt out in woodlands near Glyn Ceiriog, the remains of Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 491 (H191 VVG, TJI 5401, H167 EUJ) passed to Furber, Whixall (dealer).

Terravision, Stansted Airport

Another Scania K114/Irizar Century tri-axle is YN06 KFY. Similar YN06 CJF and two-axle YN04 YJK are being used on the new Manchester-Liverpool John Lennon Airport service (Buses October).

TM Travel, Chesterfield

A third VDL SB120/Plaxton Centro B40F is YN56 WEC. Two new Optare Solos are due for delivery in October; first to arrive is YN56 AHY.

Acquired in October from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) was former Arriva Midlands Scania N113DRB/Northern Counties H47/33F H803 RWJ.

A coaching addition — for just a few weeks — was ex-Bagshaw, New Whittington Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool C53F YX1 4381 (F737 ENE), passing quickly on to Pearson, Chesterfield. DAF SB4000 YJ05 PZB was hired Arriva Bus & Coach (dealer) for a holiday tour to Spain.

continued overleaf...

Left: Stagecoach Yorkshire has applied corporate livery to 29898 (1901 HE), its unique East Lancs-bodied Kirm Mogul, which also carries Yorkshire Traction fleetnumber 208.

STEPHEN WHITELEY

The last MCW Metrobuses, KYV 800X, OJD 814Y and A929 SUL, were sold via ADT Auctions, Manchester. Volvo coach R7 TMT has gone to Plaxton, Anston (dealer). Optare Solo MX03 YDB has returned to Mistral Bus & Coach (dealer).

Town & Country, Runcorn

Optare Solo DK06 OXD is new for service 200 (Murdishaw-Runcorn Employment Suite).

Transdev Harrogate & District TD

Volvo B10M-55/East Lancs B45F 426 (K26 WBV) has been on loan to cover for Dennis Javelin 150, rather than entering service with Lancashire United as expected. Volvo B10M/Plaxton C53F 302 (KE51 WUP) has also been on loan, from store at Burnley, to assist with Flower Show specials.

Volvo B10BLEs 305/6 are scheduled to receive Knaresborough livery. Yellow-liveried Keighley & District Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 501 was returned before the autumn school term.

Transdev London

The first Scania OmniCity double-deckers for London are H41/23D-seated SP1-7 (YN56 FCA/C-G/J) for the 148 (Shepherds Bush-Camberwell). Eight more are expected.

Transit Group, Hare Street, Herts

New Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts EU06 KOX, KPA are at work and former Burton, Haverhill Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Premiere T13 VCC has been acquired.

In store are unused articulated Leyland-DAB BBZ 8051; Leyland National KOM 792P, THX 153S, TVP 856S, AOL 17T, BVP 761V, BYW 405V; Leyland National 2 JTF 972W; MCW Metrobus B251 WUL; Leyland Lynxes G105, 255/7 EOG, J45 GGB; Dennis Darts J157 GAT, J653 XHL, K715 KGU. B251 WUL, G255 EOG, J45 GGB and J157 GAT are cannibalised. KOM 792P, TVP 856S, BVP 761V, BYW 405V, JTF 972W, K715 KGU have never been used. KOM 792P is still in its guise of a Travel West Midlands mobile ticket office.

Dennis Dart P685 RWU and Leyland Tiger MIB 5834 have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

The Essex County Council contract has been gained for Monday-Saturday evenings 71C (Chelmsford-Colchester) journeys, from First, widening Transit's area farther east.

Travelquest (Guest), Bournemouth

New in June was MX06 BPF, a Plaxton Primo/B28F in allover (Contravision included) Conservation Express livery for the service linking Durdle Door and Monkey World, Wareham. Secondhand additions are Optare Solo M920/B33F MX05 ELO/U.

Travel London NX

Reported as the last Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts built, new MPDs DP1-4 (LJ56 ONH/K-M) are for Surrey route 441 (Englefield Green-Heathrow). Travel Dundee has taken E101-4 (R985/90-2 EWU), the ex-Capital Logistics Optare Excels that predecessor Tellings-Golden Miller tried unsuccessfully to sell a year or two back,



Above: Thamesdown 401 (G522 WJF) is one of three Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians acquired for student transport. They were new to Midland Fox and latterly were with Arriva North West & Wales. **IAN DENT**

Travel West Midlands NX

The first of the Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B42F, 1751 (BX56 XBT), arrived in October and similar 1752-7/60 (BX56 XBU/V/W/Y/Z, XCA/D) were noted on delivery at Fleetwood early that month. They are destined for Acocks Green to convert service 37 (Birmingham-Solihull) back to single-deck operation, in turn cascading Volvo B7TLs to Travel Coventry to replace MCW Metrobuses.

Also new are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers 4704/5 (BU06 CWX/Y).

Travel Wright, Newark

New Plaxton Primo KX06 LXP operates service S7L (Newark-Collingham). Also new is MAN 18.360/Noge Catalan C51F YN56 BKK.

Trent Barton WG

All Route 15 Optare Solos, 452-6, were rebranded by 29 October, and were expected to emerge in orange. Scania L94UB/Wrightbus Solar Urban 685 (FJ55 BZM) has joined 683/4/6-92 in caramel 'The Sixes' livery for the Derby-Belper corridor. Solos 406-13/43-6 (V406-8 JTO, W409, 301, 411-3 YAL, FE02 KDF/J/K/N) are dark orange livery for 'The Nines'-branded Derby-Mansfield 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 services and Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers 945/7/8 (T945 BNN, etc) in 'The Amber Line' route-branding for service 125 (Derby-Hucknall), which leaves Dart 916 (P916 CTO) as the last operational vehicle in Barton livery. Solo 440 (FP51 GXZ) has been repainted into standard Trent

Barton livery with the other Long Eaton Xprss Solos expected to get the same treatment.

Optare Excel 236 (X236 WRA) has been repainted into Mickleover livery to replace fire victim 220 (W301 PRB). Former Skyline Excels 206-8/11/2 (V206-8/11/2 ENU) have been sold to McKindless, Wishaw. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliners 9-12, 14 (V209-12 JAL, X914 ERA) have been sold to Bus Éireann for schools work.

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver 821 (N821 RFP) has gone to Midland General.

The driver trainer fleet comprises Volvo B10B/Northern Counties 113/24/30/1/4/7 (L113/24 LRA, M130/1/4/7 PRA). Former Barton Bedford YRT/Plaxton Elite III Express HRR 765N survives as 'The Tea Pot' café at Smalley.

Tyrer Bus, Nelson, Lancs

Three new 7.8m B24F Optare Solos are in service, including YJ56 AOZ.

UK North, Manchester

Ex-Stagecoach Merseyside Volvo B6/Alexander Dash DP40F L454 YAC, still in Ensignbus green and cream, has been acquired for spares.

Uno, Hatfield

New Mercedes-Benz Citaro 301-5 (BX56 VSJ-N) are B27D.

Victory Buses, St Ives, Cornwall

The St Ives park-&-ride operation is worked by former Arriva Cymru Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander Sprint B31F N719 DJC

VK Vodka

Open-top Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Vyking 44 VK is in use.

Warrington Borough Transport

Repainting of the Dennis Dart SLF fleet into Network Warrington livery continues, with sequential painting now having reached 19, although 22/6/8, which had carried overall liveries for Warrington Wolves Rugby Team and Town Centre Partnership from new, have been treated out of sequence.

Double-deckers have been renumbered by the addition of 100 to their existing fleetnumbers. First recorded was former Harrogate & District Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 63 (H514 RWX) as 163, suggesting imminent delivery of new VDL SB120s 59-65.

Ex-Arriva Leyland Olympian 74 (A142 SMA) has been back in service.



Left: Yes, there is a bus beneath the Contravision covering most of the windows of MX06 BPF, the Plaxton Primo that Travelquest is operating on the Conservation Express tourist service in Dorset. **BOB BELCHER**

Weavaway, Newbury

The two Bova Magiqs have materialised as WA56 ENWV. Moseley (dealer) has sold Scania/Rizar W341 MKY to Wills, Bow, Devon, re-registered similar R19 CES back to T908 LKE and taken in former Vince, Burghclere Bedford YMT/Duple EVC 212T. Registration R19 CES has been returned to the company for future use.

Western Greyhound, Summercourt

The PSV Circle reports this Cornish operator's acquisition of five more Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F from Scottish independents, 537/41/5 (W389 WGE, Y371 TGE, W385 WGE) from Bulldog, Bathgate and 548/9 (W348/9 WCS) from Rowe, Kilmarnock. It has re-registered 537 as WSV 537, while Leyland Olympian 649 (WLT 649, C523 LJF) reverted to its original mark when it was withdrawn in August.

Wiltax, New Haw, Surrey

Former Metrobus all-Leyland Olympian G805 SMV has been acquired. Coach operation has started, initially using ex-Hallmark Dennis R-series/Plaxton Paragon Y11/5/8 BMC and one-time Hummingbird, London Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere L276 HJD.

Wilts & Dorset GA

DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 3158-60 (T158-60 ALJ) are in latest livery for the re-launch of service 8 (Salisbury-Andover).

Optare MetroRiders 2224/7 (N224 VRC, P227 CTV) have been transferred to Tourist Coaches as 6224/7 and 2543/6 (N543/7 UFX) to Damory Coaches, where they are 5143/7. Around 10 are likely to be transferred to Southern Vectis after service changes. Damory MetroRiders 5226 (N226 VRC), 5540/7 (M540 LEL, N547 UFX) have been renumbered 5146/1/8 respectively and Tourist Coaches MetroRider 6114 (J512 RPR) has been transferred to Damory.

Leyland Olympian/ECW 4904/6/7 (A904 JPR, A989/90 XAF) have gone to Swanage-based dealers.

Woolacombe Bay Holiday Parks

This established operation is using part-open-top Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW AFJ 705T on the tortuous climb to ferry Woolacombe guests between Parks and the beach and town, undertaken until a few years ago by two ex-Taff Ely AEC Regent Vs.

Wootens, Chesham

A further double-decker acquired for school services is Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW HSV 673 (JWV 272W), from Taylor, Aylesbury. New to Southdown, it passed to Brighton & Hove and rejoins JWV 273W here.

Zara, Mucklow Hill

Former Arriva Yorkshire Optare MetroRiders M749 WWR and N756 LWW are the latest acquisitions to this steadily expanding fleet.

Z&S International, Aylesbury

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash N670 VUP has been acquired. Incidentally, the VDL DB250/Optare Spectra (Fleet News last month) wasn't the last; as noted above, that went to Anglian, Beccles.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympians 59, 70 (BMN 59V, 70M) and all-Leyland 84/5 (BMN 84/5G) were sold to Geoff Amos, Eydon in September.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

We require reports on Channel Island operators, as none have been received for some time.

JERSEY

Puddle Ducks

Alan le Breton advises me that the operation between Elizabeth Castle and the shore, with its fleet of three locally built amphibious vehicles, was offered for sale this autumn. The buyer has to enter into an agreement with the Jersey Heritage Trust to guarantee a regular service.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks from me on behalf of readers to each of the following for giving your time to contribute to my columns:

Thanks are due to this month to the following for your welcome contributions to Fleet News: N. Ames, Kelvin Amos, Andrew Babbs, Andrew Bagshaw, Chris Barker, Bill Barlow, Stephen Barton, Michael Bawles, Kenneth Bladon, Derek Bradfield, British Bus Publishing, British Trolleybus Society, Bus Fare, Cambridge Omnibus Society, Cambus, Roger Carey, Anthony Carver-Smith, Chalkwell Coach Hire & Tours, Andrew P. Churchill, Chris Clegg, Brian Coney, Chris Corroy, Richard Cranmer, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Cumbria Transport Society, Nigel Diplock, Julian Dolman, Clive Eglington, Ensignbus, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, Essex Bus News, Matthew Evans, First Group Enthusiasts Club, Ian Francis, Fylde Tramway Society, Greater Manchester Transport Society, Peter Guppy, Adrian Healey, Steven E. Hodgson, Tony F. Hunter, Clive Johnson, Paul D. Johnson, The Journal, David Jukes, Matt King, Steven Knight, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire Transport Review, London Omnibus Traction Society, Christopher Lowe, Mark Lyons, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, M&T News, Merseyside Bus Club, Metroliner, Geoff Mills, Keith Nason, Geoff Nelson, Ross Newman, Simon Nicholas, Billy Nicol, David A. Noddings, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, Nottingham City Transport, PSV Circle, Deric Pemberton, David Penlington, James Penton, Bob Perrin, John Podgorski, T. S. Powell, H. Powell, Ribble Enthusiasts Club, Graham Richardson, Andy Rigby, M. G. Robins, Dave Russell, Phil Shafe, Norman Sharrock, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, Ian Simpson, Adrian C. Small, Richard Smiles, R. G. Smith, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, G. Southgate, Eric Speckman, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiasts Group, Stagecoach Manchester, Stagecoach Transit, David Stanier, Chris Stewart, John Taylor, Dave B. Thomas, Steve Thompson, Nick Thomson, Transpire — The Chesterfield Bus Society, Paul Turner, United Enthusiasts Club, Jeff Watson, Trevor Watson, Michael P. Webster, Wessex bi-monthly Transport Review, Wessex Transport Society, West Yorkshire Information Service, West Yorkshire Metro Transport News, Wheels, Lee Whitehead, Steve White's website (www.spw24.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk), Dave Wilder, Trystan Williams, Wilts & Dorset, Michael Wootten, John Young.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	A-Line Coaches
BASED:	Head office and depot — Unit 1, Pelaw Industrial Estate, Pelaw, Tyne & Wear (two buses are outstationed at Kingsley Coaches' Birtley depot)
WEBSITE:	www.a-linecoaches.co.uk
FOUNDED:	1973 when Les and David Annis, who worked in the petroleum industry, purchased Duple-bodied Bedford SB5 FXG 440 and the order book from Wilkinson's Coaches of Springwell Village in 1973. The brothers still run what today is one of the area's oldest independents. The growing company acquired Hall Autos and Lawson's Tours of Wallsend in 1980. Following deregulation in 1986, emphasis switched to buses for Nexus contracts and fleet strength peaked at around 15 in 1987/88. The coach fleet is down to two.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Commercial bus service M12 (Fairways estate-Pelaw Metro), 12 schools services, some tours, but mainly contracts and private hire. The Nexus contract for service 6 (Jesmond Vale-Newcastle Central Station) has just ended.
LIVERY:	Red and white, though some vehicles are all white.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Four buses (Leyland Lynx new to Go North East, Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart new to London General, Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dart new to AirLinks and ex-Selkent Plaxton Verde-bodied Dennis Lance salvaged after Stagecoach's Carlisle depot was flooded), one Dormobile Routemaster-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D minibus and two coaches (Van Hool-bodied DAF MB230 and Duple 425 integral).
NEWEST VEHICLE?:	23-seat Optare Solo W291 EYG was hired from Dawsonrentals for service 6 from September 2005 until 31 October this year.
ON ORDER:	A secondhand coach will be purchased early in 2007.
MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE:	Out of around 60 operated since 1973, Les Annis says a Ford R226 was his worst coach, while Ford Transit CVS 945T clocked up 1 million km before falling apart. Van Hool-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger C588 ORG was a rarity, as was PMT Ami-bodied Mercedes Benz 811D H815 LFS, purchased new. Two double-deckers owned were ex-Glasgow Leyland Atlantean LA389 (MUS 274F) and ex-Go North East MCW Metrobus 3789 (C789 OCN), that operator's newest MkII. Bus operations started with ex-Devon General Leyland Nationals MOD 816/7P, replaced by three National 2s from United — APT 117W lasted until 2005. Made to Measure-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E694 UNB lasted 18 years, ending up with First in Bath until 2005.



Above: Oldest bus in the A-Line fleet is KUI 6575, an ex-Go North East Leyland Lynx. Go North East replaced the original bonded windscreens on its Lynxes with less attractive, but presumably more practical gasket-mounted windows. ANDREW JAROSZ

GROUP CODES

AA
Arriva
Passenger
Services
DG
Comfort
Delgro

EB
Ensignbus

EY
EYMS
Group

FG
FirstGroup

GA
Go-Ahead
Group

NX
National
Express
Group

ST
Stagecoach
Group

TD
Transdev

TGM
Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE
Veolia

WG
Wellglade
Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to:
**Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens,
Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by
15 December for the February issue.

AAA Coaches, Kirknewton

Marcopolo Viaggio II 330 C70FL-bodied MAN school coach PN06 TTE was new in April and supplied to this operator in May.

ABC Travel, Kirkcowan

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 614D V2 AMS was acquired in June ex-Aberfeldy Motors 26 and Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 ESK 880 (D389 UGB, 3786 AT, D695 OSJ, GIL 1681, D562 MVR) was transferred from the King, Kirkcowan fleet then.

Aberfeldy Motors

Van Hool Alizée C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P503 VUS (NLZ 708, P503 VUS) was acquired in August ex-Sharp, Scarrington.

Allan, Gorebridge

C32F-seated Mercedes-Benz Tourino O510 B18 DWA and Irizar S-Kool C70FL-bodied Scania K94B4s B20/1 DWA were new in August. The latter pair is all over yellow.

Arriva Scotland West AA

Northern Counties B35F-bodied Dennis Darts 1690/2 (L129/52 YVK) arrived in October from Arriva Yorkshire, and entered service from Inchinnan depot.

New half-hourly Monday to Saturday service 6 (Bridge of Weir-Braehead Shopping Centre via Houston and Linwood) is due to start on 4 December.

Austin, Earlston

Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 XSV 234 (C176 EMU, CLZ 1860, C176 EMU) was acquired in August ex-Aberfeldy Motors 33.

Ayrways, Patna

ECW H43/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R DWW 932Y and Jubilee M16-bodied Iveco Daily 49.10 L452 HOE were acquired by March ex-Stuart, Carlisle and McKechnie, Bathgate respectively. Other recent additions comprise Van Hool Alizée C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M260 TRJ (3402 FM, M260 TRJ, SPR 35) ex-Fraser Eagle, Accrington in July; similar C49F-bodied B10M-61 WIL 7215 (C860 PSM) ex-Central Taxis, Torry in August; Berkhof C49F-bodied B10M-62 R910 ULA ex-Hills, Wolverhampton in August; Plaxton C50F-bodied B10M-62 N211 HWX (N3 GPD, N211 HWX) ex-Abbey, Neilston in August; and Irizar C51F-bodied Scania K124IB4 V319 ESM (V9 DOT) ex-Dodds, Ayr in September.

Bain, Oldmeldrum

Dormobile C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L259 VSU was acquired for spares earlier this year from Watermill, Fraserburgh. Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 BHZ 1261 (430 UFM, C299 UFP) and similar C53F-bodied DAF MB230 E132 YUD arrived in August ex-Gillen, Port Glasgow.

Bryans, Denny

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R R983 FYS was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn in September.

Bulldog, Bathgate

Onyx C19F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D S331 CSF was acquired from Horsburgh, Uphall by August. The two Dennis Lance SLF buses mentioned last month are Berkhof 2000 B40F-bodied 11SDAs M405/7 OKM, latterly Brighton & Hove 282/4 but previously with Stagecoach South East. Similar Optare Sigma B47F-bodied N410 MPN was also acquired by August, ex-Brighton & Hove 110.

Burns, Tarves

Ikarus C70F-bodied DAF SB3000s P161 RWR, P716 RWU were acquired from Holmeswood Coaches, Holmeswood in August last year but have not been recorded until now. Onyx M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cd MK02 GAU also joined the fleet last year ex-Timberbush, Edinburgh.

Cheyne, Daviot

Optare Nouvelle 2 C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds YX55 ABF/U were new in September last year.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 VRG 939 (M873 GYS) was sold to Highland Country in June.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F L25 LSG joined this fleet in August ex-First Southern National 743.

Clyde Coast, Ardrossan

Recently acquired Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61 WSF 989Y (HIL 6407, WSF 494Y, GSV 351, LS 8411, GSH 495Y) was re-registered DIG 8714 by October.

Coakley, Motherwell

New hourly, Monday to Saturday service 153 (Motherwell/Bellshill/ Chapelhall/Newarthill/ Carfin/Motherwell) is due to start on 18 December.

Cosgrove (Fishers Tours), Dundee

The National Entitlement Card-friendly range of services introduced earlier this year for the summer season was replaced from early November with similar style services to more appropriate destinations for the winter months.

The new services comprise 231 (Brechtin-Livingston via Forfar, Dundee, Glenrothes and Dunfermline, alternate Mondays from 6 November); 232 (Brechtin-Stirling via Forfar, Dundee, Perth and Gleneagles, alternate Tuesdays from 7 November); 233 (Brechtin-Leith via Forfar, Dundee, Milnathort, Kinross and Edinburgh, alternate Wednesdays from 8 November); 234 (Dundee-Aberdeen via Forfar, Brechin, Laurencekirk, Stonehaven and Portlethen, alternate Thursdays from 9 November); 235 (Brechtin-Glasgow via Forfar, Dundee, Perth, Gleneagles and Stirling, alternate Fridays from 10 November); 236 (Arbroath-Livingston via Carnoustie, Monifieth, Dundee, Glenrothes and Dunfermline, alternate Mondays from

13 November); 237 (Arbroath-Stirling via Carnoustie, Monifieth, Dundee, Perth and Gleneagles, alternate Tuesdays from 14 November); 238 (Arbroath-Leith via Carnoustie, Monifieth, Dundee, Milnathort, Kinross and Edinburgh, alternate Wednesdays from 15 November); 239 (Dundee, Meadowside-Aberdeen via Monifieth, Carnoustie, Arbroath, Montrose, Stonehaven, alternate Thursdays from 16 November; and 240 (Arbroath-Glasgow via Carnoustie, Dundee, Perth, Gleneagles, Stirling, alternate Fridays from 17 November).

Davies, Plean

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 CNZ 2978 (R554 JDF) passed to West Coast Coaches, Dysart in August.

DB Travel, Dumbarton

Alexander (Belfast) Sprint B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L128 DRN had joined this fleet by August.

DJ International, Barrhead

Marshall C19 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M328 TJA (M8 JPT) was acquired from Gillen, Port Glasgow in August.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 GIL 3573 (L701 AHS, 7062 WW, L254 AHS, KSK 950, SKY 784) was badly damaged by fire in October.

Docherty, Glasgow

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart K831 SFT joined this fleet by September.

Docherty, Irvine

LDV Convoy YX03 LLC was sold to Church of the Nazarene, Irvine in August.

Doig, Glasgow

SN06 KKY, KNZ are Esker Tourings C35F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 1523Ls, which were new around May.

Optare Solera-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L SF51 RCY was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn in June.

Donaldson, St Andrews

Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D W639 MKY was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn by August.

First Aberdeen FG

National Express-liveried Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 21153 was repainted into First coach livery in September, but with Grampian Coaches fleetnames rather than the usual Grampian Executive.

The recently repainted buses that carried just their local three-digit numbers at the front and rear have been given their full fleetnumbers.

Having been used as a source of spares, Plaxton Paramount 3200-bodied Volvo B10M-61 20023 (F101 HSO, ESK 956, F101 HSO) passed to Petrie, Forfar by September for possible further use.

First Edinburgh FG

BMC 1100FE schoolbus 68554 (LK05 FCE), last recorded with this company, joined the First Glasgow fleet in August.

First Glasgow FG

Two more BMC 1100FE yellow schoolbuses which joined the fleet in August are B60F-seated 68501 (BU04 CAA) ex-First West Yorkshire and B55FL-seated 68554 (LK05 FCE) ex-First Edinburgh. They operate from Dumbarton depot.

Wright Eclipse Urban B43F-bodied Volvo B7RLEs 69027/42 (SF55 UAV, UBB), on loan since new to First Northern Ireland, entered service from Scotstoun depot in October. Similar new buses 66988-91 (SF56 GYP/R-T) have been allocated to Larkfield.

Wright Eclipse Fusion AB56D-bodied B7LA 10146 [AV23] (X146 FPO) returned to service at Scotstoun depot in September, having been out of use since suffering fire damage on its first day in service after transfer from First Hampshire & Dorset, 10 December 2004.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 32805/24 were rebuilt from H39/20D to H39/22F by October.

Left: First Edinburgh has rebranded East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekkas on its 43/X43/X4 routes between South Queensferry and the city centre in the fashion of 36024 (SN05 HWR). **PHIL HALEWOOD**



SANDY MACDONALD



Eight projects secure latest round of BRDG funding

Six transport authorities and five operators have secured £7.5million Scottish Executive funding in the third allocation of Bus Route Development Grant money — the Scottish equivalent of Kick-Start. This covers eight separate projects to help finance enhanced bus services and takes the total BRDG allocation so far to £24.2million, covering 46 projects promoted by 19 transport authorities.

Aberdeenshire Council and Stagecoach Bluebird will operate two of the new projects. One will enhance the Aberdeen-Banchory service, increasing the peak frequency to every 15min and off-peak services to every 20min and providing better integration with other bus services in Banchory, with the new bus/coach/rail interchange in Aberdeen and a proposed park-&-ride car park in Banchory. The other is to increase the frequency of services 216/217 (Westhill-Aberdeen) to every 10min in the daytime, using low-floor accessible buses, enhancing connections between the residential and industrial/commercial parts of Westhill as well as to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Both services will benefit from improved bus stop infrastructure.

Fife Council and Stagecoach Fife will increase Dunfermline town service D7 (Townhill) to every 10min to complete the conversion of services in the expanding eastern part of the town to low-floor accessible buses. It will also provide improved links to Ferrytoll park-&-ride and Inverkeithing railway station to benefit commuters travelling to/from Edinburgh.

Midlothian Council and Lothian Buses benefit exclusively from two other projects. One is to provide a dedicated four-times-hourly express service between the new Sheriffhall park-&-ride and Edinburgh city centre, with improved connections to Dalkeith, Newtongrange, Lasswade and Gorebridge

as well as to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The second of these projects extends Lothian cross-city service 29 to Eskbank and Mayfield four times an hour, providing improved connections for out-of-town and city centre shopping facilities and to the Western General Hospital.

Together with City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian and Lothian Buses have also secured funding to provide hourly night bus services connecting Dalkeith, Newtongrange and Mayfield with Lochend, Ocean Terminal and Edinburgh Airport.

West Lothian and E. & M. Horsburgh are to provide an hourly enhanced low-floor bus service between Livingston, Edinburgh Park and Stevenson College, with substantially improved links to Edinburgh Airport, the Royal Bank of Scotland headquarters, Heriot Watt University and Oakbank industrial estate. The expectation is that this will promote economic growth in West Lothian by improving access to employment, education, retail and leisure facilities.

The one additional west of Scotland project sees Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and Irvine's Coaches of Law enhance hourly service X5 (East Kilbride-Eddlewood) to half-hourly using accessible low-floor buses with an extension to the new Torhead Park Estate.

Announcing these awards, Scottish Executive transport minister Tavish Scott said: 'We want to give people real travel alternatives to the car. That is why we are investing in these important new and enhanced routes. They will give people that choice, while reducing congestion and the damage that causes to our environment. We are now seeing increases in bus passenger numbers. Through grants such as this, our government will do all it can to keep these numbers rising.'

Competition Commission finds against joint venture

As reported in this month's News section (see p8), the Competition Commission wants the Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture to sell some of its Glasgow-Aberdeen and Edinburgh-Inverness routes to an independent operator in order to restore competition to previous levels.

Edinburgh's new airport minibus connection

Just a few weeks after the demise of the short-lived Hotel HopAir service at Glasgow Airport, a similar demand-responsive minibus service is to be started at Edinburgh Airport.

Edinburgh Shuttle will offer a door-to-door passenger service between the airport and the city centre, taking passengers from the airport to the front door of their hotel, business or home anywhere within the city centre zone. For journeys from the city centre to the airport, it will pick customers up at their front door. The service starts on 11 December, running daily and departing every 15min during the airport's core flight times (weekdays 07.15 to 19.30) and every 20 or 30min in the early morning, late evening and at weekends.

Edinburgh Shuttle Ltd is a private limited company incorporated on 30 June 2000 as The Overground Ltd. It changed its name to Edinburgh Buses Ltd in November 2001 and to its present name on 28 September this year. The registered office is at 55 Annandale Street, Edinburgh — the same address as Lothian Buses' Central Garage — and the operator licence covers four operating centres at Lothian's Central, Longstone, Marine and Seafield garages.

A fleet of new seven-seater minicoaches will be used, offering generous luggage space and value for money fares with discounts for more than one passenger travelling together. Passengers can either pre-book tickets on-line or by phone, or simply turn up and go.

Service changes implemented from 8 October included the re-routing of 3 (Robroyston-Pollok Centre) and 55 (Buchanan Bus Station-Braehead Shopping Centre) via the newly opened Glasgow Arc bridge, Anderston and Argyle Street. Services in the Glasgow-Cumbernauld corridor were revised again with the introduction of new services X2 (Glasgow city centre-Carrickstone), X4/FX4 (Glasgow city centre-Abronnhill), and service X3 changed to operate Glasgow city centre-Abronnhill. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 99 (Glasgow city centre/Bellshill-Eurocentral) was withdrawn from 27 October.

Garelochhead Coaches

Further to last month's issue, Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 F106 TML was originally registered F107 TML.

As a result of low passenger usage, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 317 (Garelochhead-Portincaple) was withdrawn on 6 October. Alternative facilities are available on SPT Lomond Ring'n Ride service 950.

Gibson, Renfrew

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs V100 CBC and W386 WGE are the latest repaints into the new version of the dark blue and white livery.

Glasgow Citybus

Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart J309 BRM was received on loan from parent company West Coast Motors in October and used mainly on service 17 (Duntocher-Glasgow city centre).

UVG UrbanStar-bodied Dennis Dart SLF R551 UOT was repainted into fleet livery, ex-K-Line white and blue, by September.

Goosecroft, Denny

Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L643 DNA (B88 BUS, L643 DNA) was acquired by August ex-Hamilton, Falkirk.



Above: Highland Country 362 (G807 GSX), the Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian recently acquired from Lothian Buses, at its new base in Fort William. **STEVE MASKELL**

Henderson, Hamilton

B33F-seated Optare Solo 506 (YJ06 YSG) arrived in October, having been used by the manufacturer as a demonstrator since it was new in May.

Alexander (Belfast) Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D P455 MFS was sold at auction in September.

New Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 172 (Cambuslang-East Kilbride) was started on 9 October, largely replacing the previous commercial service run by this company. From the same date, hourly evening service 327 (Kirkintilloch-Twechar) was started on behalf of SPT.

Highland Country RN

Alexander H51/30D-bodied Leyland Olympian ON2R56C 362 (G807 GSX) was acquired from Lothian Buses in

September and subsequently entered service from Fort William depot in two-tone blue.

Further vehicles re-registered around August were Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelins 492 (S690 RWG, LTU 284, S690 RWG) to WX1 878; 493 (SY51 EZU) to MX1 694; Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 629 (N905 AAS, YBZ 818, N905 AAS) to NX1 327; and similar Van Hool Alizée-bodied 671 (N90 TGM, 850 RFX, N90 TGM) to 3692 NT.

Hired Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50s M718 BCS and M553 FWV (YLJ 332, M553 FWV, 403 DCD, M403 BFG) returned to Stagecoach Bluebird in July.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 648 was repainted into blue and navy bus livery around August.

FLEET:	The Morrin Group (Puma/Colchri)
BASED:	Westway Development, Porterfield Road, Renfrew
FOUNDED:	1992 when Tony Morrin, officially based in Erskine, started up Puma Coaches. His first commercial service began in August that year between Govan Bus Station and Pollok Centre/Cowglen Savings Bank in Glasgow. In 2000, a second company, Colchri Ltd, was set up to carry out tendered work, including a Strathclyde Passenger Transport Kirkintilloch-Milngavie service in 2002. Vehicles were previously based at Yorkhill Quay, then Whiteinch, in Glasgow.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Puma continues to operate various commercial services in south-west Glasgow. A contract was won in 1998 to provide a late evening and early morning staff bus for the Glasgow Subway in the Greater Glasgow area. Colchri operates SPT service 374 (Shawlands-Pollok Centre, extended commercially to Braehead Shopping Centre) and school contracts.
LIVERY:	Initial Puma livery was white with black/red/yellow and a black puma motif, but many Puma vehicles have carried overall advertising liveries. Colchri livery was white with blue and gold fleetnames. Several vehicles carry Strathclyde Partnership for Transport carmine and cream.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	The first vehicles were Alexander-bodied Dodge S56 minibuses, Mercedes-Benz and Freight Rover Sherpa vehicles following. MCW Metroriders and Dennis Darts were the subsequent choice. A few full-size coaches have also been owned. A notable feature of the fleet has been the number of buses acquired from Fife Scottish and Stagecoach Fife.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	Duple 425 integral coach F365 MUT, and Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL K106 XHG, illustrated last month.



Above: Puma Coaches H153 MOB, a Carlyle Dartline-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDL, on service 23 at Glasgow's Pollok shopping centre, currently being transformed into the new Silverburn regional shopping centre, which will incorporate a redesigned bus stand and separate bus-based park-&-ride service between car parks adjacent to the M77 and the city centre. **SANDY MACDONALD**



Above: A June 1997 view of F61 RFS, a former Stagecoach Fife MCW Metrorider, in Pollok. **ALAN MILLAR**

Highwayman, Errol

ECW H42/30F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH C34 CHM arrived in August ex-Galleon Travel, Hunsdon. Bova Futura FHD12-340 TIJ 929 (*R101 PWR*) regained its original registration in August, allowing Neoplan-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA M902 OVR to become TIJ 929.

Hutchison, Overtown

Duple 300-bodied Volvo B10M-55 J17 BUS returned from its loan to Mundell, Port Askaig at the beginning of October.

Irvine, Law

Berkhof-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W300 LCT and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113CRB P11 RVN (*P97 GHE*) were re-registered W31 RVN and P97 GHE respectively in August. The latter was then sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis.

Irvine, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 WIL 3629 (*F105 SEU*) joined this fleet in August ex-Lowe, Cuminestown.

Jay, Greengairs

Further to last month's report, new Optare Solo YJ06 YRG is reported to be an M850, whereas the second new Solo, YJ06 YRF, is an M880.

JJ Travel, Coatbridge

Roe C49F-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger Doyen A958 USL (*H01 2319, A654 EMY*) and Plaxton C57F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R A403 HRJ (*WLT 694, A403 HRJ*) were acquired in August ex-Bryson, Bonnybridge.

Keir, Kintore

Jonckheere C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 JEY 659Y (*102 UTF, NAG 455A, MRP 847Y*) was acquired in May last year ex-Goodsir, Holyhead.

Made to Measure-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D FJP 501 (*K657 VNF*) and LDV Convoy R86 VOM were sold by the end of last year.

King, Kirkcowan

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61 ESK 880 (*D389 UGB, 3786 AT, D695 OSJ, GIL 1681, D562 MVR*) was transferred to the ABC, Kirkcowan fleet in June.

Lafferty, Glenboig

Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R84 NNJ was in use by July in its previous owner's green and yellow livery, but was in fleet colours by October.

Lindsay, Lochboisdale

Plaxton C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCL10/3ARZM F705 ENE (*TXY 978, 665 EYL, F705 ENE*) was acquired in May ex-Stainthorpe, Skelton.

Lippen, Paisley

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport-liveried Optare Solo YB06 VNU was delivered in October for use on the new SPT service 63.

Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle

Jonckheere Mistral 70-bodied Volvo B12Bs FJ06 BSV/X/Y are named *Glen Lochy*, *Glen Falloch*, and *Glen Etive* respectively.

Lothian LB

New harlequin-liveried Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 769/71/2/4/7 (*SN56 ACJ/UV/VZ*, ADV) entered service on route 16 (Silverknowes-Hunter's Tryst/Colinton) rather ominously on Friday 13 October. Some of them have also appeared on Sunday workings of service 27.

Airlink-liveried Dennis Tridents 634/52/3 have been repainted in harlequin livery; similar 654/5 are being so treated but will be kept in the reserve fleet meantime.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 559/68/9/75 had been converted from H47/24D to H47/28F by September.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 807 was sold to Highland Country in September.

A separate operator licence has been applied for in the name of Majestic Tours Edinburgh Ltd, to run up to 15 vehicles.

Lowe, Cuminestown

Plaxton C32F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S496 UAK was acquired in October last year ex-Stewart, Inveraman. It was re-registered NUI 1582 upon arrival, when Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D NUI 1582 (*G292 TSL*) regained its original registration.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 WIL 3629 (*F105 SEU*) passed to Irvine, Salsburgh in August.

McCall, Lockerbie

Vehicles acquired earlier this year comprise Duple C57F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA F529 NTT ex-MacEwan, Amisfield in February; similar F682 CYC (*NIL 7252, F682 CYC*) ex-Routespek, Earsham in May; Duple C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ G799 RNC ex-Roberts, Ruthin in July; Alexander (Belfast) B63F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R GEZ 1277 (*VOI 189*) ex-Ulsterbus 189 in July; and Plaxton C48F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R KBM 533Y (*824 CDM, KBM 533Y*) ex-Bowman, Burthwaite in August.

Plaxton-bodied DAF SB2300 RJ1 2720 (*A463 HJF*) was sold in January, and

Duple-bodied Volvo B10M-61 RSJ 812Y (*RJI 4378, ESJ 812Y*) was acquired by MacEwan, Amisfield in July. Other vehicles sold for scrap earlier this year comprise Van Hool-bodied AEC Reliance VFY 770 (*EGS 171T*), Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R JSV 468 (*FNM 865Y*), similar Duple-bodied EJ1 2340 (*JNM 751Y*), Jonckheere-bodied DAF SB2300 JIL 5655 (*A2 WKC, A111 SNH*) and Bova Futura FHD12-280 B899 GWJ (*1083 RD*).

McColl, Balloch

Former Travel West Midlands Alexander ALX100 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R270 XDA, acquired some time ago and used initially in its previous owner's livery, was repainted into fleet colours by September.

McDade, Uddingston

Plaxton Cheeta C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D VU06 KFG was new in July.

MacEwan, Amisfield

Duple C57F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA F529 NTT was acquired in January from MacLennan, Laxay but passed to McCall, Lockerbie in February without being used. Duple C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 RSJ 812Y (*RJI 4378, ESJ 812Y*) was acquired from McCall in July.

McGill, Greenock

With the end of the summer SmoothieCruiser season, new hourly Mondays to Saturdays (two-hourly on Sundays) daytime service 901 (Largs-Glasgow city centre via Gourcock) was started on 23 October in competition with the parallel Scottish Citylink service 901. SmoothieCruiser Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s T517/20 EUB are being used.

McKendry, Loanhead

Marshall H47/31F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R TJT 196X was acquired from Prentice, West Calder in August.

McKindless, Wishaw

Outstanding news is that a new Chinese-built King Long 6113 service bus was delivered to this operator at the end of October, apparently one of several to be used on service 41 (Hamilton-Lanark) it is registered BX56 XAP.

B45F-seated Optare Excel L1150s V207/8/11 ENU are more of the 10 acquired from Trent Barton in August, and were numbered 207/8/11 by their previous owner. Iveco Daily 50C11 X852 BVN has Mellor M16L bodywork and was owned previously by TLS (non-PSV), Salford.

Further to the October issue, Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympians G536/9 VBB entered service as H47/31F, having been converted to single door before acquisition.

Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart K368 RTY has been repainted allover white with red lettering for use as a driver trainer.

MacLennan, Laxay

Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA F529 NTT passed to MacEwan, Amisfield in January.

MacPhail, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Scania K124IB4 SM02 GSM was acquired in August ex-Mayne, Buckie.

Marshall, Baillieston

Van Hool Alizée C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M959 XST (B2 YST, YST 738, M680 KVL) was added to this fleet in August ex-Mathieson, Inverness.

Similar B10M-61 WIW 3627 (E689 JUT, LIW 3460, E689 JUT) passed to Jackson, Ettrick in September.

Mayne, Buckie

Plaxton Paramount C57F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 F130 AEL (A18 EXC, F458 WFX) was acquired in May last year ex-Sim, Boot.

Meffan, Kirriemuir ST

Further to the October issue, Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D TIL 7897 (F29 CWY) has been numbered 41338.

Midland, Auchterarder

B42F-seated Mercedes-Benz Citaro Q530 BX05 UVZ and Optare Tempo X1200 YJ06 FZK were demonstrated to this company in July and September respectively.

Milligan, Mauchline

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 C516 DND was re-registered MIL 3218 in June and sold to Prentice, West Calder in August.

M-Line, Alloa

Marshall C31-bodied Iveco TurboDaily 59-12 M8 BLU was sold to Thistle, Dalry in June while Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YSU 872 (L756 YGE, GSO 84V, L756 YGE) and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R953 RCH (711 GRM, R953 RCH) passed to West Coast Coaches, Dysart in July.

Morrin Group, Renfrew

Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart demonstrator SN56 AYA was on loan to this operator from 16-18 October and was used on Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 374.

Morrison, Timgarry

This Lewis operator, trading as Uig Bus Service and providing certain journeys on Western Isles Council service W4 (Brenish-Stornoway), recently acquired 17-seater Ford Transit BG52 VJU.

Munro, Jedburgh

The outstanding MCV Evolution B44F-bodied MAN 14.220 buses for this fleet arrived in July as AE06 VPR/T-V.

Mundell, Port Askaig

Duple 300-bodied Volvo B10M-55 J17 BUS was returned to Hutchison, Overtown at the beginning of October.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

KVC M14-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413CDIs A4 MWN, N3 CLL were new in May 2004 but have not been recorded until now. N3 CLL was re-registered N33 CLL in December 2004.



Above: Rennie, Dunfermline LSK 478, a Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M, operating Scottish Citylink service 909, which it has taken over from WJC Buses. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**

Park, Hamilton

Van Hool CH57/14Ct-bodied Volvo B12(T) LSK 498 (R261 OFJ) was transferred to this fleet from Trathens, Plymouth in August but returned in September.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12(T) double-deck coaches KSK 981/3 were repainted into full Megabus blue livery in September, ex-black and gold.

Passenger Travel, Bathgate

Three services have been registered by this new operator, comprising hourly Monday to Saturday circulars 800/801 (Blackridge/Armadale/Bathgate/Livingston) started on 13 November, and hourly weekday circular 120 (Eastfield/Harthill/Blackburn/Bathgate/Blackridge), due to start on 4 December.

Petrie (JP), Forfar

Autobus M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 412D R626 FCT joined this fleet in August ex-Simpson, Rosehearty and Plaxton Paramount 3200-bodied Volvo B10M-61 (F101 HSO, ESK 956, F101 HSO) arrived from First Aberdeen by September.

Prentice, West Calder

Plaxton C70F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 MIL 3218 (C516 DND) was acquired in August ex-Milligan, Mauchline and immediately re-registered YSV 618.

Various Volvo B10M-60s were also re-registered in August/September comprising DLZ 4298 (F171 RJF, DLZ 4298, F171 RJF) to 138 ASV; 138 ASV (HIL 8646, G341 HSC) to DLZ 4298; PIL 2162 (K919 UBB) to 755 ABL; and PIL 7834 (K594 VBC) to 828 EWB.

The new 138 ASV and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 TDZ 1960 (M308 BAV) were re-seated C70F ex-C57F in August.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61s RIA 5991, 755 ABL (A190/4 MNE) were sold to Burlinson, Scunthorpe in July. August disposals comprised Marshall-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R TJT 196X to McKendry, Loanhead; MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/63s E453/5 SON and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2R B760 GSC to Imperial Bus, Rainham; MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/63 E452 SON to Hunn, Debenham; and Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-61 CBZ 4622 (E747 HJF, WSV 490, E747 HJF) to Martin, Uphall. Olympus-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D SIL 7058 (H643 YDS) was also sold then.

Pride of the Clyde, Greenock

Marcopolo Viaggio C57F-bodied MAN 18.360 PN04 NPC was acquired in August ex-Holmeswood Coaches, Holmeswood. It has been noted operating on a Slaemuir Coaches disc.

Rapson, Tain

Service M12 (Tain-Portmahomack) is being cancelled at the end of the year as a result of re-tendering by Highland Council.

Rennie, Dunfermline

This company took over operation of Scottish Citylink service 909 (Edinburgh-Stirling/Dunblane) from 2 October. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo coaches LSK 478/9, CCZ 5837 are being used, LSK 479 having been repainted into full Citylink livery by October. Roe H43/29F-bodied Leyland

Olympian ONTL11/1R TPD 108X passed to Festival Radio, Edinburgh by August.

Riverside, Barrhead

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart SA02 GXO was repainted into fleet livery by October.

Robertson, Cuminstown

Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit minibus FV05 XWU was new last year.

Ross, Beaulay

Plaxton Beaver B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L256 YOD was acquired by April ex-Plymouth Citybus 256.

Scotbus, Inverness

Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S378 PGB was acquired by February ex-Owen, Denbigh and East Lincs H50/36F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68B/2R GFV 152W had joined the fleet by April ex-Preston 152.

Scottish Citylink DG

The Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture Hotel HopAir service 501 ended on 6 November, rather than the previously reported 16 October.

Secure Airparks, Edinburgh

B21F-seated Optare Solo M920 KX06 LYJ was new in July and is numbered BUS2.

Shiel, Acharacle

Plaxton Paramount-bodied Volvo B10M46 JIL 3961 (G402 XMK, G605 XMD) was re-registered G402 XMK by June and repainted allover white in lieu of the old white, red and blue livery, presumably for disposal. Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-48 R974 RHS was re-registered JIL 3961 then.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

New Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts SN56 AYF/G have been numbered 8, 9 respectively.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R GSU 551 (A201 MFR), new in 1983, was advertised for sale in October.

Services to Irvine's Riverside Business Park, arranged by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and funded for some years by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, were reduced at the end of September when the funding was withdrawn. Service 338 (Perceton-Riverside Business Park) was withdrawn completely after 29 September but SPT agreed to help maintain service 311 (Ardrossan-Riverside Business Park) with only one peak hour return journey between Kilwinning, Whitehurst Park and Riverside.

Silver Fox, Renfrew

Bova Futura FHD12-340s SIL 1103/4 (R956 JGE; T49 OGB) regained their original registrations in May before being sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough.

Simpson, Rosehearty

Autobus-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 412D R626 FCT was sold to Petrie, Forfar in August.

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
DelGro

FG

FirstGroup

LB

Lothian
Buses

NX

National
Express
Group

RN

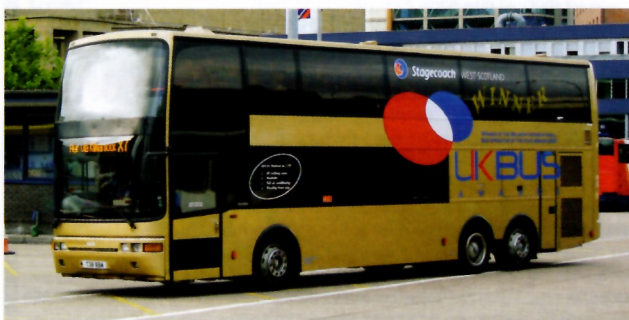
Rapsons

ST

Stagecoach
Group



Left: Shuttle Buses SN56 AYG is one of the first two Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts for a Scottish fleet. Both of these 8.9m short wheelbase buses operate service X31 (Irvine-West Kilbride). GORDON MUNRO



Left: Stagecoach Western 50038 (T38 BBW), a Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350 built for the Oxford Tube service, carries this gold livery to commemorate the company's winning of the 2005 Bus Operator of the Year award. It has also won the 2006 award. KEITH MCGILLIVRAY

Skye-Ways, Kyle

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R SN03 LJA was re-registered BSO 240 in March.

Smith, Coupar Angus

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L631 AYS (LSK 827) was re-registered CAZ 1577 in May.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Scottish Citylink-liveried Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350s 50035/6/9/52/66 (T35/6 DFC, T39 DJO, T52 BBW, W66 BBW) were transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Western in August.

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts 32120 and 32381 were repainted into corporate livery by October, in lieu of the Scottish Citylink colours applied earlier in the year.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs 14654/6/63 (C654/6/63 LFT) moved to Stagecoach Western in August, and Alexander-bodied Scania L113CRL 28955 (M100 AAB) was returned to that company then.

Stagecoach Western ST

Alexander PS B49F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 20177 (K577 LTS) joined this fleet in June, having previously been used by Stagecoach Merseyside, and was re-seated B61F in August. Magic Bus-liveried Alexander H45/31F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs 14654/6/63 (C654/6/63 LFT) were transferred from Stagecoach Glasgow in August, together with Alexander Strider-bodied Scania L113CRL 28955 (M100 AAB).

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 14415/98 (K515 ESS, J198 YSS) were transferred to Stagecoach Fife in August and Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350s 50035/6/9/52/66 (T35/6 DFC, T39 DJO, T52 BBW, W66 BBW) moved to Stagecoach Glasgow then.

Stepend, Glenmavis

Marshall B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D P234 EJW, acquired some time ago and used in the livery of Travel West Midlands, its former owner, was repainted into fleet colours by October.

Stewart, Portlithen

Crest M16-bodied LDV Convoy S216 BSG was acquired by the end of last year ex-MacPherson, Loanhead.

Stonehouse Coaches, Larkhall

Alexander H47/32F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 F104 TML was acquired in August ex-Arriva Merseyside 3674.

Similar East Lancs H45/34F-bodied H668 GPF followed in September ex-Arriva Scotland West 880.

Stuart, Carluke

Van Hool Alizée T9 C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 Y15 AMS joined this fleet in September; previously owned by Aberfeldy Motors, it was used by Hutchison, Overtown during the summer.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians DWW 932Y and C770 SFS were acquired by Airways, Patna and Watermill, Fraserburgh respectively, earlier this year.

Thomson Group, Glasgow

B25F-seated Optare MetroRider MR37s P411/5/6 TFR, previously Preston 11/5/6, were acquired by this operator by October.

Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs T415/7 LGP have been repainted allover white with Caledonia fleetnames on the front, in lieu of allover yellow Airbus Express livery.

The Airbus Express service 950 (Glasgow Airport-Glasgow, Buchanan bus station) is being withdrawn from 27 November.

Travel Dundee NX

Four B35F-seated Optare Excel L1000s transferred to this fleet in October from Travel London are 209-12 (R990/2/1/85 EWU); they were numbered E102/4/3/1 respectively in London.

Wright Liberator-bodied Volvo B10Ls 147/8, Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6LEs 162-4 and Optare Excels 210/1 have been given a new Ferry Link livery for services 9X/10X (Forthill/Ninewells Hospital/Technology Park), comprising silver with dark blue wave effect on the sides and 'Ferry Link' branding applied in flags above the windows towards the rear.

On 1-3 September, a half-hourly free shuttle service was operated between Dundee city centre and Camperdown Park in connection with the Dundee Food & Flower Festival.

Tulloch, Forres

This operator trades as Forres Minicoaches and has been awarded five-year Highland Council contracts to provide a Naimshire Dial-a-Bus service, which will replace conventional services 12 (Naim-Croy) and 13 (Naim-Ardsier) from the beginning of January. The company has also won the contract to provide Naim town service from the same time, although the outcome of this was still under discussion in October.

Victoria, Peterhead

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MX54 KLF was new in February last year but has not been recorded until now.

Wait, Chirnside

Indcar Maxim C24F-bodied Iveco EuroMidi CC80E18M/P W814 AAY was acquired in May ex-Holmeswood Coaches, Holmeswood and immediately re-registered OUI 9687.

Walker Group, Barrhead

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds F134 UMD, G903 UPP, H923 FGS and similar Plaxton Beaver-bodied K227/8 SFJ, K393 SLB were sold for scrap by October.

Services F26 (Paisley, Central Road-Nethercraigs via Fairway Avenue), and F61 (Paisley, Smithhills Street-Foxbar House via Amochrie Road), which were officially to start on 21 September, have both been cancelled from 20 December.

New Monday to Saturday service 66 (Gallowhill-Hurlet Road via Paisley Cross) is due to start on 8 December.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

ECW H51/32D-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2R C770 SFS joined this fleet in August ex-Stuart, Carluke. Ford M14-bodied Ford Transit LAZ 9205 was also acquired then ex-Noble, Fraserburgh, and entered service in October.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 HSV 725 (F46 TMU) regained its original registration in May, allowing Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-55 to become HSV 725 then.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans CWG 694V and YBK 340V were sold for scrap in November last year, and similar YBK 342V met the same fate in May. YBK 341V, however, was sold for non-PSV use in Aberdeen in May. Marshall-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D K819 AEG was sold for scrap in March.

Waverley, Edinburgh

Further to the September issue, KX06 LYS is a B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart new in March.

West Coast, Campbeltown

Rothsay-based Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart J309 BFM was loaned to Glasgow Citybus in October.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards CSF 159/67W, acquired from Docherty, Irvine in March for possible further use, are to be broken up for spares.

Onyx-bodied DAF 400s L263/4 AAG, L937 WFW (K200 WCM, L937 WFW) were all sold by September for private use.

Western Isles Council

Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D V397 SVV was noted in use with this operator during September, either on loan from a dealer or acquired.

Wilson, Gourock

Plaxton C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 A18 SOE (K879 EAW) was acquired in August ex-Stephenson, Rochford and has been used on the Greenock-Helensburgh service. It was quickly re-registered back to K879 EAW, then to WIL 6502 in October.

Other vehicles re-registered then comprise Mercedes-Benz 709Ds P398 FEA, N345 OBC, N470 SPA, M107 WKA to WIL 6457, 6587, 6957/81 respectively.

Service 26 (Greenock-Linwood, Phoenix Retail Park) is being withdrawn from 8 December.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Former Allander, Milngavie Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R SF03 ACJ (3786 AT, SF03 ACJ) was used by this operator in August.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

M. Anderson, E. Cameron, C. Carberry, N. Cram, Dundee Area Bus Forum, P. Halewood, Lothian Buses, D. McGeachan, C. Mennie, W. Milne, G. Munro, B. Nicol, S. Oliver, PSV Circle, renfrewshirebus@yahoo.co.uk, scotlandbus@yahoo.co.uk, scotlandbus@yahoo.co.uk, sescotbus@yahoo.co.uk, Shuttle Buses, Stagecoach Glasgow, Stagecoach Western and R. Walter have contributed news items this month. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

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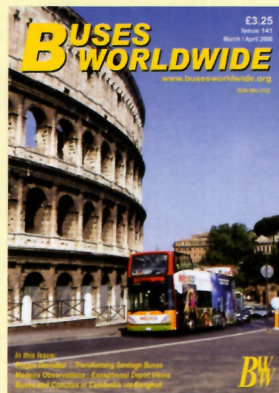
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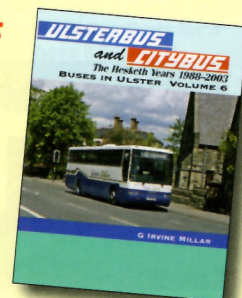
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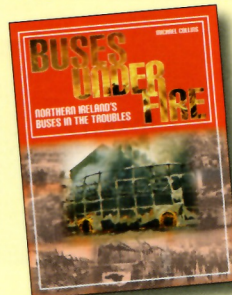
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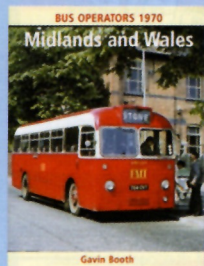
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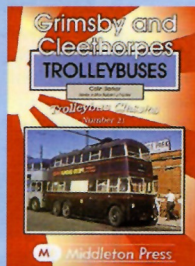
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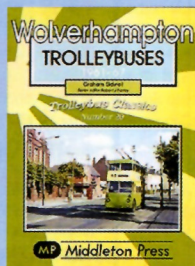
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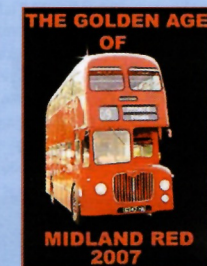
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MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The inflow of new vehicles continues, with MAN ND363F/Ayats Bravo double-deck Goldline coaches 2021/2/4/5 (BXI 321/2/4/5) entering service at Armagh (two), Omagh, and Dungannon. These include the two that your correspondent spotted on delivery in south-west Scotland last July and again in August. Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B44F buses are 2433-50 (GX1 433/4, FX1 395, GX1 436-43, FX1 384/91, GX1 446/7, FX1 388, GX1 449/50).

Among many consequent reallocations of older vehicles, Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultras 2751-60 (LAZ 2751-60), originally operated on Derry City services, have been relegated to rural services in the same area, while Lisburn-based Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 2809-11 (CCZ 8809-11) have transferred to Metro.

Withdrawn from service to reserve were Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-types 341/2/63/70 (DXI 3341 etc), 391/3 (FXI 391/3), 414 (JEZ 8977, FXI 414), 447/9/70/7 (GX1 447/9, HXI 470/9). However, 391/3, 447/9 returned to service a fortnight later, together with 354/85, 482 (DXI 354, FXI 385, IXI 1482), placed in reserve earlier; 414 is also back in service with its new registration mark.

N-type Tigers 385/6/95/7, 400 (FXI 385 etc) have been re-registered KEZ 2859, 1271, 5807, 3552/5; 420-2/28/9/31-4/6-8 (GX1 420 etc) have become to KEZ 1269/8/70, 3553/4, 1841/40, 5805/6, 6407-9, while similar 1317-9 have regained original marks PXI 1317-9. Leyland Leopard 179 (VOI 179) has been re-registered KEZ 4386 on paper at least), while withdrawn Bristol RELL6G 2431 (WOI 2431), still on the books, has been renumbered 4431.

Leopard/Alexander buses sold to Hamill (dealer), Ahoghill for scrap are 214/23/37/40/47/50/3/4 (WOI 2214 etc), 279 (YOI 2279); 282 (IEZ 2529, AXI 282), 301/2 (XOI 2301/2) and 313/6 (GEZ 8113, AXI 313; JEZ 6821, AXI 316). Leopard 187 (LKZ 6715, VOI 187) has gone to T. Montgomery, Ballymena, to provide spare parts for his preservation project on 333, while similar 211 (WOI 2211) has gone to F. Curry, Pinxton, Notts for preservation.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere coaches 1561-3/72 (DAZ 1561-3/72) and 1575/8/80/4/7/8/95 (EAZ 2575 etc) have gone to Plaxton Sales (dealer), Anston. At least two were so quickly resold that their new owner, Rapson's, was able to intercept them at Stranraer ferry port and drive them north. From the same batch, 1584 is reported sold to GHA Coaches, Wrexham.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 856/75 (NXI 6856, TXI 7875) have been sold to as yet unidentified buyers. Mercedes 711D/Alexander 904 (JAZ 3904) is sold to McGonagle, Buncrana, Co. Donegal. Similar vehicles sold through Carryduff Auctions and reported with new owners are 895 (JAZ 3895) with Seawright, Carryduff (dealer); 897 (JAZ 3897) with Mulhearn, Monaghan; 898 (JAZ 3898) with Temple Golf & Country Club, Ballynahinch; 899 (JAZ 3899) with Fleming & Cuthbert, Ballyclare; and 903 (JAZ 3903) with Farrell, Dundalk. It is thought that all these may be for non-psv purposes.

Metro

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2809-11 (CCZ 8809-11) have been transferred from Ulsterbus. Apparently, these three were chosen because their Translink green livery was thought not to include the usual stripes of Ulsterbus blue. However, this was a misunderstanding, and the vehicles have operated on Metro service from Great Victoria Street in Ulsterbus colours, a potentially confusing situation that Citybus/Metro has tried to avoid in the past.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-types 2678/9 (VXI 2678/9), reported withdrawn to reserve last month, have returned to service.

Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra 2749 (LAZ 2749) carries an overall advertisement for Investors in People.

Dublin Bus

The conclusion of the Ryder Cup golf tournament on 24 September triggered the entry into regular service of Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 H49/27F AX504-45 at

Harristown (AX504-16), Conyngham Road (AX517-25) and Donnybrook (AX526-45), while AX449-503 returned to



Above right and below: Because the Northern Ireland vehicle registration system has no facility to hold registration marks on retention, Ulsterbus has been in the unusual position lately of legally operating pairs of vehicles briefly with the same registration. These pictures taken in Coleraine on 4 October show new Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UB 2438 and Alexander N-type Leyland Tiger 438 both registered GXI 438, while Tiger 404 had become JEZ 4095 after donating FXI 404 to new Scania 2404. Tiger 438 has since been re-registered KEZ 6409.

DAVID LONGBOTTOM



normal service. The Donnybrook buses operate mainly on routes 111/A/B. AX546-8 subsequently entered service at Broadstone, which re-opened reopened for operational use from 31 October, with 28 existing 'Euro' duties transferred there from Harristown; AX510-6 also transferred there temporarily from Harristown pending further deliveries of more new AXs. AX549-67 and several of the others up to AX591 are in store at Broadstone and Harristown pending allocation; AX549-648 — all due by the end of the year — will expand the total fleet size.

Large numbers of Alexander-bodied Leyland and Volvo Olympians have been withdrawn. The Leylands are RH89-91 (91 D 1089-91), RH105-10 (91 D 10101-10), RH143-53 (92 D 143-53) and RH161/2/8-75 (93 D 10161/2/8-75), all of which have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet. Further to Fleet News last month, although RH161/2 re-entered service, RH158 (93 D 10158) remained in the driving school but either it or RH157 is believed sold to Ensign. The Volvos withdrawn are RA176-85/8/90-5 (94 D 176 etc) and RA196-200 (95 D 196-200). RA186/7/9 have been retained temporarily while AX-class B7TLs undergo a series of modifications, but tenders are expected to be invited to buy all of RA176-95.

Also withdrawn are DAF SB220LT/Alexander Setanta B43D AD66-70 (94 D 33066-70) and similar Volvo B10Bs VA1, 3-10 (96 D 2001/3-10), of which VA4-10 have gone to Bus Éireann. VA1 and VA3 were due to follow them.

Bus Éireann

Dublin Bus Volvo B10B/Alexander Setantas VA4-10 (96 D 2004-10) have been transferred here, initially at least for public services. VA7-10 are at Broadstone mainly to work Naas-Newbridge and Ashbourne-Blanchardstown Shopping Centre shuttle services. However, a surprise but logical development has seen VA4-6 transferred to Cork for city services and placed in service with Bus Éireann logos applied to their previous owner's yellow/navy livery. These buses are mechanically similar to Wright Endurance-bodied

VW1-9 (97 C 809/1/4/2/7/22/18, 97 L 424/5), which have served Cork since 1997. The transfer of VA4-6 was triggered by the destruction by fire on 4 October of Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer DPC24 (02 C 16542), but there had been no replacements to cover the earlier fire destruction of Wright-bodied Volvos VWL118 and VWM1, 4.

More vehicles acquired from the UK for schoolbus work are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner C49Ft V209-12 JAL, X914 ERA from Trent Barton. They will be numbered VP411-5, though not necessarily in order. Also acquired, ex-National Express, are Volvo B7R/Plaxton C53F VR101-4 (W922-4/6 PCD).

Wheelchair accessible Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Commuter demonstrator WC1 (BP54 WYH) has been evaluated from Broadstone and Cork on various commuter routes including 111 (Trim-Dublin).

Irisbus Scolabuses IS1, 4 (06 D 73414/9) are confirmed as being Longford-based. The PSV Circle reports that Alexander Dennis Enviro300s AS1-4 are B46F and AS5 is B55F; BMCs BS1-5 are B61F; Mercedes-Benz ES1-5 are B55F; Scolabuses IS1-4 are B54F and IS5 is B66F.

More GAC Rural Buses withdrawn are KS62/9, 70/4/6, 81, 115 (EZV 62 etc), KS127/38/44/5/56 (PZV 127 etc), KS214-7 (XZV 214-7) and KS218-20 (87 D 2218-20). These withdrawals eliminate this Irish-built type from the Broadstone area and leave only five in the Galway area.

Caetano-bodied Volvo B12M VC319 (03 D 55406) was damaged extensively by fire on 29 October while working near Blessington, Co. Wicklow and may be a write off.

The overnight coach services linking Dublin and Belfast began as planned on 2 October. Contractor Callinan Coaches appears to be covering the Bus Éireann input (e.g. tri-axle 06 G 612 noted on the 01.00 departure ex-Dublin on 18 October). Another overnight service, introduced on 31 October, was on route 32 (Letterkenny-Dublin via Strabane, Omagh, Monaghan and Dublin Airport). Nine daily services include overnight departures from Letterkenny at 01.45 and 05.30.



Ensign plans two pre-Christmas running days

Following the success of last year's vintage bus running day on Ensignbus's commercially operated X80 service, the event is being repeated on a larger and extended basis on two busy Saturdays before Christmas — 25 November and 2 December.

The service this year will be extended to run between Gravesend, Kent and Grays,

Essex — both within the boundaries of the old London Transport Country Area — and will follow Ensign's newly added routes 77-83 and 66, between Lakeside and Grays. The full route will include stops at Lakeside and Bluewater shopping centres.

The service frequency has also been increased from last year's hourly to a half-hourly service between 09.00 and 18.00, thus allowing some popular after dark runs. As last year, the buses will be substituted throughout the day

to make sure there is a constant variety of vehicles in service, which will include London, provincial, guest vehicles and what the company says should be 'an Ensign surprise vehicle'.

Local X80 fares will apply, but a £6 enthusiast special day pass will also be valid on heritage vehicles and Ensign local buses for the day. The money raised will all go back into the restoration fund to help preserve, repatriate and maintain the various projects on the go and planned. A downloadable timetable will be posted on the company's website, www.ensignbus.com and other information on the services is available by e-mailing info@ensign-museum.com, or phoning 01708 865656.



Left: The latest addition to the Ensignbus heritage fleet is KTJ 204C, an East Lancs-bodied Leyland Titan PD2/37 new to Lancaster City Transport and latterly with Calvary Coaches of Washington, which applied its Tyneside Omnibus Company fleetname. On 15 October, it was operating Blue Triangle heritage service 622. **RUSSELL YOUNG**

Central Seddon saved for restoration

A unique wheelchair accessible ex-Scottish Bus Group Seddon Pennine VII has been secured for restoration. New in 1976 as Western SMT DS2579, MSJ 385P was one

of four Seddons with Alexander T-type bodywork converted by SBG to accommodate wheelchairs, with 24 rather than the original 49 seats, and a centre mounted lift. It was allocated to Central Scottish, which numbered it SP1

and then operated until recently with Andrews Coaches of Foxton, near Cambridge. Glasgow preservationist John Kennedy has taken it back to Scotland and plans to restore it to the condition in which it ran with Central. He is replacing the Plaxton seats fitted by Andrews with a set of authentic Alexander seats for 24 passengers.

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Above: Central Scottish SP1 in December 1985.

Below: MSJ 385P as it is today. **JOHN KENNEDY**



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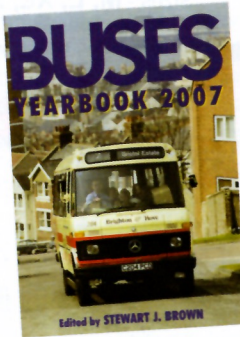
You may just have noticed that 26 October 2006 was the 20th anniversary of deregulation. There have been numerous attempts to mark it in print, and this year's *Buses Yearbook* is among them.

Actually, I got the impression that this is rather more of a tribute to deregulation than just one article on the topic, 'Interesting Times', by David Thrower; quite a lot of this book reminds you of the changes that have taken place over the past 20 years or so. Indeed, Alan Millar kicks off with a very useful article about the changes of ownership that have gone on over the past 12 months or so; just when you think the bus industry has settled down, something happens to disrupt its familiar shape. In this case, it was the expansion of Stagecoach with takeovers not least of GTL and Traction Group, plus its joint venture with Scottish Citylink that dominated the changes, though that was only part of the picture. And such are the lead times of *Buses Yearbook* that it wasn't possible to include Stagecoach's move in the opposite direction with the sale of its London operations. But this is a useful reminder of what happened to the UK industry in 2005/06, with Go-Ahead going ahead and the French invasion. Where's Nelson when you need him?

Gavin Booth's article also tracks deregulation, though that's not exactly its intention: it's about the necessity for the bus industry to keep moving with the times, and the former editor of *Classic Bus* lays his cards on the table (or is it his head on the block?) and admits it was time for the Routemaster to go — if not well past time.

It's not all about deregulation, though. Stewart Brown recalls Highland Omnibuses and David Wayman gives an amusing insight into driving Ribble's Manchester-Bradford service in the 1970s, which had me mentally bouncing over the Pennines and enjoying sounds of Leyland Leopards. Funny, the things that can invoke nostalgia, even though I seem to remember reading some of it, and seeing some of the pictures, before. Stuart Jones also gets nostalgic about Midland Red and wanders farther afield.

If photography's your thing, this year's *Yearbook* will not disappoint. It has some of the finest photography for some years; it may be that it's especially well printed, but every photo seems to sparkle, and lots of them are in colour: and not just the recent ones, either. Mike Greenwood describes the excitement of finding



photos of vehicles you've been seeking for years, and among the illustrations, including a bizarre Leicester Leyland Titan TD7 single-deck conversion, is a rare colour one of a BMMO D10 in Leicester.

Two masters of black and white photography, Robert Jowitt and Geoff Mills, both appear in glorious Technicolor, Mr Jowitt heading off unexpectedly to the Netherlands,

Belgium and Luxembourg and — generally — behaving himself; there's more bus (or tram) than skirt this time. Roy Marshall sticks to black & white for some superb pictures of Nottingham's AECs and at the other extreme Peter Rowlands admits to what he gets up to now he's gone digital: will you ever trust a published photo again?

It's a good eclectic mix and well worth £14.99 for the photos alone.

STEPHEN MORRIS

MALTESE BUSES OF YESTERYEAR

BUSES WORLDWIDE (Stuart Harvey, MBOY Orders, 18 Windrush Drive, High Wycombe, HP13 7UL), ISSN 1751 9756, 205mm x 145mm, 128pp, SOFTBACK, £7.00

Malta has been many British enthusiasts' entry to the exotic world of overseas buses, 'Abroad Lite' if you like, as the chassis of many of them at least began life bearing some resemblance to vehicles at home, even if the bodywork may have been more peculiar to the island. Even the mass influx of new low-floor buses in recent years has maintained that interest as two of the types — the BMC Falcon and King Long — have also been sold in Britain. Add to that the fact that Malta for many years was home to the British military, it drives on the right and many islanders speak our language and you should understand the appeal that it holds.

If you've only got to know Malta's buses within the past 20-odd years, then this book from the marvellous resources of Buses Worldwide will help you understand what runs today, but above all what you missed 40 years ago when the shapes of the buses were recognisable, but the colours were almost infinitely variable.

Its highlights are two sets of reminiscences of past decades. Mac Head, who served in the Royal Navy and was posted to Malta in November 1959, describes the joy of discovering the multi-coloured buses and even more of discovering how to use them to explore an island that had yet to become the package holiday destination that it is today. It's a story of more than just the scheduled buses — he mentions the RN vehicles and the one-off

experience he and many off-duty service personnel indulged in when borrowing bikes with even fewer brakes than the buses — and he confesses to having made all these journeys with little knowledge then of where places were in relation to each other. He only bought a map years later when holidaying in Malta.

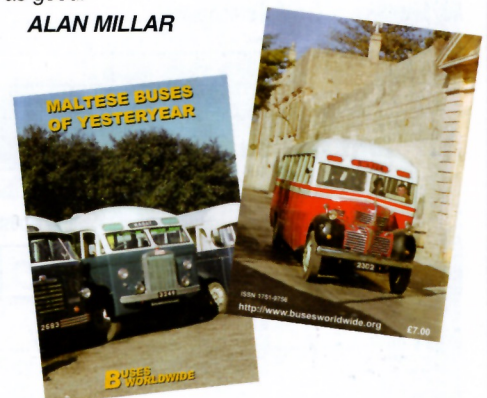
Just as evocative of an earlier age are the childhood recollections of Steve Chandler, whose father flew RAF Lancasters from Malta in the early 1950s and whose time away from school included many enjoyable hours in the company of one of the island's owner driver bus proprietors.

These mesh together with Bus Worldwide's own amassed knowledge of how the bus routes were organised from the 1950s to the present day and a truly priceless selection of mostly colour photographs taken or collected by Andrew Johnson, Geoff Morant, Roger De Boer, Marco Zammit and Steve Chandler. The introduction confesses to some of these having been enhanced to make good the ravages of the years and one view of the Gozo ferry terminal is apparently a digital combination of two separate pictures, but these silk purses of pictures clearly never were anything like sows' ears to begin with.

If your experience of Maltese buses is confined either to the yellow, orange and white of today or the green that applied from 1977 to 1995, then this shows what you missed. Networks of buses that also wore reds, blues, browns, greens and various combinations of these. As the narrative explains — and just as in some parts of Britain — route colours were essential when adult literacy was far from universal, even less than 50 years ago.

The pictures also acknowledge the present day, showing many vehicles in various colours that either survived until recently in yellow or run on today, and where they don't survive, captions often reveal the identity of the more modern vehicles that took their place and identity. A similar book is now planned on the buses of neighbouring Gozo. The high standard of this book gives me confidence that it will be every bit as good.

ALAN MILLAR





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- 1336. Blackpool, UK. Trams.** The Tram Collection 1993-1996. All your favourite scenes transferred via digital film to enjoy with all the quality of the original.
- 1337. Blackpool, UK. Trams.** The Tram Collection 1997-1998. All your favourite scenes transferred via digital film to enjoy with all the quality of the original.
- 1338. Blackpool, UK. Trams.** The Tram Collection 1998-2002. All your favourite scenes right up until we started producing them from new in DVD format.
- 1339. World of Double Deckers.** Buses. Archive footage from around the world with several rarities, includes Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Middle East.
- 1340. Crich, National Tramway Museum.** Derbyshire, UK. A retro compendium with three visits to the Tramathon days in 1991, 1992 and 2002 now on DVD.
- 1341. Malta, Buses.** 1998. A Retro Compendium with all the highlights of our trip with as many buses crammed in as we could, our first visit in post bus livery era.
- 1345. RM Finale, UK. Buses.** London. The last full day of RMs 8th December 2005, film by John Bishop plus a look back to how RMs looked 10 years earlier.
- 1347. Bus Marque, UK.** Leyland National, Buses. Starts with tour of Australian National operators then early days in UK , tour of Britain, artics, special uses etc.
- 1354. Bus Spot - Cardiff Trolleybuses, UK.** Trolleybuses. 1960s. All the best scenes carefully selected from the PMP archive with natural authentic sound added.
- 1355. Bus Spot - Maidstone, UK.** Buses Trolleybuses. An exquisite review of the former Kent municipal operator from trolleys and half cabs plus plenty of M&D.
- 1356. Birmingham, UK. Buses.** February 2006. Our long outstanding visit to the heart of the Midlands , friendly crews as usual , plenty of bus activity.
- 1357. Best Ever Brighton, UK. Buses and Trolleys.** 1960s-80s. The outstanding film by John Bishop featuring the erstwhile much missed municipal operator.
- 1358. Nottingham, UK. Buses & Trams.** Feb 2006. A chance to catch up with the very modern Scania orientated Nottingham fleet bus fleet and a few tram.
- 1359. Bus Marque, UK.** The Lodekka Family, UK Buses. A look at this distinctive bus which dominated the Tilling fleets from the 1950s to 70s scenes all over the UK.
- 1360. North Lincs, UK. Buses.** Feb 2006. A sunny day at Southunthorpe and Grimstby, Road Car still not showing signs of Stagecoach ownership, lots of new stock.
- 1363. Sheffield, UK. Buses / Trams.** February 2006. A very cold winters day, no sign of livery change on Terrier but last East Midlands Olympian on service.
- 1364. Derbyshire, UK. Buses.** February 2006. Derby with bus station closure and traffic chaos plus Chesterfield and interesting independent scenes.
- 1365. Dublin, Ireland. Buses.** Light Rail. March 2006. Brilliant spring sunshine in which to have a look at Luas in action and new three axle Enviro, impressive!



- 1366. Manchester, UK. Buses.** March 2006. The new Shudehill interchange, Piccadilly with lots of GM buses incl vehicles in Transdev red livery.
- 1367. Bus Spot Stockport, UK. Buses.** The usual format archives from 60s -80s from cine then regular video visits from 1989 through to 2005.
- 1368. Malta, Buses.** March 2006. Something old , something new , our theme for this Saturday visit with good coverage of the wide range of buses.
- 1369. Malta, Buses.** March 2006. More explorations around Malta including Sliema, St Julians etc, still an astonishing variety of buses in service.
- 1370. Romford, UK. Buses.** April 2006. Lots of bus activity with friendly crews and even the sun shines, what more could we ask.
- 1371. Liverpool, April 2006, UK. Buses.** Paradise Interchange, a new bus station, new buses galore, friendly crews, even the sun shines on us.
- 1372. Cheshire, UK. Buses.** March / April 2006. We start with snow scenes in Chester then move on to Warrington bus station construction then Widnes.
- 1373. Cobham, UK. Buses.** April 2006. Arrivals at Wisley , another huge turnout with plenty of sunshine taken as they arrive before the great deluge.
- 1374. Glasgow, UK. Buses.** April 2006. Taken on Good Friday, blustery weather with good sunny breaks, concentrates on Buchanan St bus station plus Paisley.
- 1375. Falkirk, Dundee, Aberdeen, UK. Buses.** April 2006. A great year of locations with blustery wind and sunshine, Stagecoach Tayside 1st livery applications.
- 1376. Inverness, Elgin, UK Buses.** April 2006. Scenes taken in Inverness on bright Saturday morning, afternoon at Elgin very busy, Cairngorms Mountain Hwy.
- 1377. Edinburgh, UK Buses.** April 2006. A bright sunny spring day in Edinburgh with plenty of activity , operators, liveries and buses, sublime stuff!
- 1378. Swindon, Wiltshire, UK. Buses.** April 2006. Courtesy Thamesdown an official visit to the splendid new depot also town centre operations and Stagecoach.

- 1379. Bristol, Avon, UK. Buses.** April 2006. By popular demand a return visit on a bright warm sunny spring day with lots of bus activity amidst the reconstruction.
- 1382. Durham, UK. Buses.** April 2006. The roundabout near the bus station provides virtually non stop bus action with lots of vehicle types and liveries.
- 1383. Co Durham / Gateshead, UK. Buses.** April / May 2006. Consett Stanley Chester Le Street Gateshead plus Metrocentre Rally runs 90 minutes.
- 1388. North Wales, UK. Buses.** March / May 2006. Two visits with winter weather at Wrexham then an early summer at Caernarfon and Bangor.
- 1389. Worcester & Hereford, UK. Buses.** May 2006. A very busy and interesting visit to Worcester and Hereford never fails with interesting independents.
- 1390. York, UK. Buses.** May 2006. A visit to look at the innovative First 'Streetscars' , a good sunny day with plenty of other buses as well, recommended.
- 1396. CVRTC Rally Gaydon.** June 2006. UK. Trucks / Lorries / Commercial. Part one of our extensive survey of this amazing celebration of commercials.
- 1397. CVRTC Rally Gaydon.** June 2006. UK. Trucks/Lorries/Commercials. Second part of coverage include lorries leaving in the wonderful sunshine.
- 1398. Black Country Living Museum.** Trolleybus Weekend. UK. Trolleybuses. Up to eight trolleybuses in amazingly hot weather, the longest UK trolley route.
- 1399. Burnley and Blackburn, Lancashire, UK. Buses.** June 2006. Two weekday afternoon visits with buses earning their living in glorious summer weather.
- 1400. Runcorn, Cheshire. Trucks.** June 2006. By popular request we recommence coverage of the current trucking scene with the hectic traffic by the M6.
- 1401. Cardiff, South Wales, UK. Buses.** June 2006. The colourful new art Scania and a comprehensive survey of all operators seen on a hot sunny day.



- 1402. Newport, South Wales, UK. Buses.** June 2006. A super sunny summer Saturday morning with sparkling scenes of the hectic bus services.
- 1403. Exeter, Torquay, Devon, UK. Buses.** July 2006. Another sunny Saturday in scorching Exeter and Torquay, plenty of activity and the most friendly crews.
- 1404. Plymouth, Devon, UK. Buses.** July 2006. A chance to catch up on the busy bus scene on a hot Saturday afternoon with both new buses and livery.
- 1405. British Truck Scenes.** Summer 2006. UK. Trucks. Lynn Services in June plus Swansea Transport Festival and scenes near Stanlow refinery Cheshire.
- 1406. Cheltenham, Gloucester, UK. Buses.** July 2006. An update on the bus scene in Cheltenham, Saturday morning and Gloucester in the afternoon.
- 1408. Lincolnshire, UK. Buses.** July 2006. The main visit is to Lincoln city, changeover to Stagecoach livery, also includes a visit to Skegness.
- 1409. Merseyside, UK. Buses.** July 2006. St Helens & Southport, two of the hottest days in the last 100 years , interesting weekday scenes on a scorcher!
- 1410. Vienna, Austria.** July 2006. Trams. Scorching hot sunny weather as we look at the delightful tram system in both city centre and suburban views.
- 1411. Graz, Austria.** July 2006. Trams, Buses. Another day of clear blue hot sunny sky and delightful trams from traditional to low floor in many liveries.
- 1412. Salzburg, Austria.** July 2006. Trolley & Buses. This time we enjoy the trolleybuses plus some motor buses incl postbuses, cab rides as well.
- 1413. Innsbruck, Austria.** July 2006. Trams / Light Rail. It couldn't get much better, route 3 in town and scenic route 6 cab ride plus interurban STB ride.
- 1414. Linz / Gmunden, Austria.** July 2006. Tram Trolleybus. Great tram scenes in the city centre in the sunshine plus the small trolleybus network.
- 1415. Bournemouth, Dorset, Buses.** 2005 / 2006. Scenes by John Bishop in spring 2005 and coverage of the scene in 2006 with new route network.
- 1416. Southampton, Hampshire. Buses.** July 2006. The very much improved bus scene with the Unilink fleet, First and Solent Blueline, an interesting time.
- 1417. Leesside, UK. Buses.** August 2006. Darlington as the High St is pedestrianised, bus chaos then Stockton High St, plenty of bus activity here.
- 1418. Oxford St. London, UK. Buses.** August 2006. The post Routemaster era and indeed post Stagecoach with many of the vehicles without fleetnames.
- 1419. Regent St. London, UK. Buses.** August 2006. We continue along Regent St to Trafalgar Square, Haymarket etc with heritage RMs, Enviro's and more.
- 1420. Stokes Bay Bus Rally, UK. Buses.** August 2006. The Gosport bus rally with line ups, the afternoon run leaving and returning, mainly in sunshine.
- 1421. Greater Manchester 2006, UK. Buses.** August 2006. Visits to Bolton, First, Arriva, Stagecoach, Transdev , then Stockport for new Enviro's on the 192.
- 1422. Antwerp, Belgium. Trams.** September 2006. Low floor cars on routes 2 /15 / 11, sunny weather, reconstruction work in the city centre.



- 1423. Brussels, Belgium. Trams.** September 2006. New Low floor cars on route 23, cloudless sunny weather, masses of locations around the city.
- 1424. Eastbourne & Brighton, UK. Buses.** Sussex, 2005 /2006 Transition from Stagecoach to B&H, new buses and Cavendish with RM in Eastbourne.
- 1425. Cumbria, UK. Buses.** Sept 2006. Starts in Barrow, friendly and sunny, through Whitehaven and Workington then to Carlisle ends at Kendal.
- 1426. Truck It North West, UK. Trucks.** July / Sept 2006. Trucks in action at Middlewich plus Truck Fest North West at Haydock Park racecourse.
- 1427. Greater Manchester, UK. Buses.** Sept 2006. Sunny visits to Bury for school traffic, Oldham weekday new buses and Heaton Park rally in the rain.
- 1428. Showbus Part One, UK. Buses.** Cambridgeshire, Sept 2006 The first 75 minutes , the biggest and best bus rally in the world, arrivals up to about 10.20.
- 1429. Showbus Part Two, UK. Buses.** Cambridgeshire. Sept 2006. The remainder of the arrivals through to the Routemaster Gold Run filmed from airside.
- 1430. Cambridgeshire, UK. Buses.** Sept 2006. Visits to Peterborough, new buses with Stagecoach plenty of independents then to Cambridge lots of action there.
- 1431. Yorkshire, UK. Buses.** August September 2006. First a look at Halifax on a summer weekday afternoon then Huddersfield at the end of September.
- 1432. Yorkshire, UK. Buses.** September 2006. First a look at Wakefield bus station on Saturday morning then on to Barnsley with ex Tracky Stagecoach buses.
- 1433. Wirral Bus & Tram Show.** Oct 2006. UK. Bus, Tram. The usual mix of bus rally, bus running day and street tram running, also scenes of 2003 & 2004.
- 1434. GVT, Glasgow Running Day, UK. Buses.** Oct 2006. A superb turn out of buses in service plus the huge array of buses resident at the Bridgeton depot.



- 784. FOLLOWING ARE A SELECTION OF FILMS ON DVD FOR THE FIRST TIME**
- 57. Scotland, UK. Buses.** 1992. 76 minutes. Video by Dave Spencer visiting Perth, Dundee, Montrose and Arbroath, April-May plenty of RMs.
- 58. Scotland, UK. Buses.** 1992. Video by Dave Spencer, April-May visiting Inverness, Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Elgin.
- 72. Edinburgh, UK. Buses.** 1992. 84 minutes. June video by Dave Spencer visited in misty summer weather all operators plus tourist services.
- 74. Glasgow, UK. Buses.** 1992. by Dave Spencer with plenty of Routemasters still operating filmed in good weather also a look back at 1996.
- 144. Scotland, UK. Buses.** 1993. Video by Dave Spencer visiting Glasgow, East Kilbride , Airdrie. Also a look back at Glasgow in 1988.
- 154. Scotland, UK. Buses.** 1993. April, video by Dave Spencer visiting Lanark, Edinburgh, Renfrew and Paisley.
- 420. East of England, UK. Buses.** March 1996. Video by Dave Spencer at Huntingdon, Cambridge, St Ives, Kettering and Northampton.
- 672. London, UK. Buses.** October 1998. Elephant and Castle through to Westminster Bridge via Waterloo, fleet numbers announced.
- 673. London, UK. Buses.** October 1998 continues from 672 via Whitehall, Trafalgar Square and along Regent St. Introduction of Arriva livery/fleet name.
- 678. London, UK. Buses.** November 1998. Victoria with tube replacement, Brixton then Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch, Edgware Road and Oxford Street.
- 689. Bristol, UK. Buses.** 1998/99. Most fleet numbers announced to aid identification, in winter sunshine between Dec 1998 and Jan 1999.
- 708. Cambridge, UK. Buses.** March 1999 . fine spring weather in Cambridge with attractive locations, fleet numbers announced, also visiting Huntingdon.

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Below are some of the updated entries section for Transport Co-ordinating Officers (Wales & Scotland) and Traffic Commissioners for the Little Red Book 2007. The Little Red Book is published in September, in time for the coach and bus shows in the Autumn. (Note: * - denotes a reply from the manufacturer/service provider/local authority or operator)

Section 3 - Organisations/Societies BRITISH OPERATORS ORGS

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The Association represents the professional views of the Executive Directors of those bus companies owned by district council and major independent operators on matters specifically affecting locally-owned bus company management and operations. Chairperson: M Robson, Ipswich Buses Ltd, 7 Constantine Road, Ipswich IP1 2DL

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The CTC's mission is to promote tourism and travel by coach.

*CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT UK

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The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT)

is the trade association representing the UK's bus and coach operators and the light rail sector. CPT has wide responsibilities ranging from representation on government working parties (national, local, EU); establishing operating codes of practice; advising on legal, technical and mechanical standards; management of the Bonded Coach Holiday Scheme, a government recognised consumer travel protection scheme and Coachmarque, an industry quality standard; 24-hour Crisis Control service for members; organisation of industry events and the first point of contact for the media on transport and other related issues.

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This index lists all the features that appeared in *Buses* during 2006. They are listed by title and, where appropriate, by subject, and authors' surnames appear in capitals. They show the month and page number on which they start. Major news items are listed overleaf.

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MAJOR 2006 NEWS STORIES

Items followed by (G) are in Global News, those with (L) are in London, those with (P) are in Preservation Update and those with (S) in Scottish Column.

JANUARY

Government refuses tram funds
Stagecoach proposes guided buses for Manchester
Go-Ahead buys Birmingham Coach Company
WA Shearings reveals new identity
Alexander Dennis shows first Euro4 buses
Stagecoach sells New Zealand bus companies (G)
Mercedes-Benz unveils 19.5m Citaro CapaCity (G)
TfL prepares for West London congestion charge (L)
Heritage Routemasters start (L)
OFT investigates Citylink/Stagecoach joint venture (S)

FEBRUARY

Transdev buys Blazefield
Stagecoach buys Traction Group
Arriva and Stagecoach launch accessible coaches
Green light for Cambridgeshire busway
Metroliner puts first Enviro400s in service
Optare offers wider Euro4 engine choice
2005 bus and coach registration statistics
Portuguese authorities reject Arriva joint venture (G)
Neoplan USA ceases manufacturing (G)
Volvo 7500 double-artics for Gothenburg (G)
End of step-entrance buses in central London (L)
More cash for Scottish kick-start routes (S)

MARCH

PTEs seek quality contract partners
Leeds and Glasgow consider BRT
Free buses in Leeds city centre
Arriva to take over Bishop Auckland from Go-Ahead
Translink places orders, seeks tenders
Lothian orders Euro4 Volvo B7RLEs
Hispano Divo destined for UK
Peter Hendy becomes TfL commissioner
NABI sold to Cerberus (G)
Blue Bird restructures (G)
Irisbus sells Ikarus (G)
New York takeovers almost complete (G)
West Coast buys Glasgow Citybus (S)

APRIL

PTEs talk to 13 operators about franchising
Stagecoach orders 460 buses
Arriva acquired MK Metro
Go-Ahead buys People's Express
Stagecoach buys Glyn Williams, Dukes services

First sets up Northern Ireland operation
Southern Vectis launches new green livery
First Volvo 9700 coaches for UK
Plaxton to build Centro on SB200 and B7RLE
Karen Buck quits government
End of line for Irisbus Agora (G)
Wright Electrociti hybrids in service (L)
Rapson's drops long-distance work (S)

MAY

Veolia buys Dunn-Line
OFT refers Stagecoach/Citylink merger
Cavendish competes in Eastbourne
Kent Fastrack starts running
Alexander Dennis announces Enviro200 Dart
Wrightbus to body MAN A22 chassis
Translink seeks coach contractors
Peter Huntley to head Go North East
Stagecoach launches Megabus in USA (G)
Neoplan takes back Lausanne trolleybuses (G)
Volvo buys into Nissan Diesel (G)
Jury out on London artics (L)
Cost of heritage Routemasters (L)
SPT ceases to be a PTE (S)

JUNE

First launches 'fr' in York, minibus link in Manchester
Stagecoach competes with First in Sheffield
Veolia buys Pullman, Croft
Go-Ahead gets first Euro4 Enviro400s
Beaumont Travel closes
Douglas Alexander becomes transport secretary
David Brown is new TfL bus boss
Arriva buys second German bus company (G)
Veolia expands in Germany, Poland (G)
Rotherhithe Tunnel minibuses end (L)

JULY

MPs demand new bus policy
Cardiff launches high-quality artics
Transdev rebrands Yellow Buses
Stagecoach/Citylink start HopAir taxibuses
East Lancs-bodied MANs for Stagecoach
New Doncaster bus station
Richard Bowker to head National Express
Arriva buys stake in Barraqueiro (G)
End of Centra in London (L)

AUGUST

Stagecoach sells London bus operations
Funding agreed for Cambridgeshire busway
ChesterBus privatisation mooted
Blue Bus back in business

Scania aims for 70% increase in sales
Chris Moyes resigns from Go-Ahead
Wright StreetCars for Las Vegas (G)

SEPTEMBER

MPs step up pressure for PTEs to control buses
Go North East launches new route brands
Rivals expand as First cuts in SW
East Lancs Olympus announced
Macquarie revives London brand names
First plans bid for Connexion (G)
End for Kenya Bus Services? (G)

OCTOBER

Blackburn and ChesterBus to be privatised
Northern Ireland buses to be liberalised
Stagecoach/Citylink venture faces break-up
Stagecoach reaches Cornwall as First cuts back
More new Go North east brands
Innsbruck to withdraw trolleybuses (G)
Last London Olympians (L)
Stagecoach/Citylink to shut HopAir

NOVEMBER

Alexander promises councils 'real powers'
Stagecoach orders 15m Plaxton Volvos
Arriva registers Chester bus network
Veolia buys Shamrock Travel Group
Go-Ahead buys Docklands Minibuses
Go North East/Arriva competition
MAN bids to buy Scania
Optare unveils Euro4 range
Stagecoach evaluates Caterpillar engine
Arriva to buy in Eastern Europe? (G)
Rotterdam buses for Connexion (G)
Scania/Caetano double-decks for KMB (G)
Stockholm backs congestion charge (G)
St Helens Museum reopens (P)

DECEMBER

Select committee backs quality contracts
Stagecoach/Citylink ordered to sell routes
Veolia buys Longs Coaches
Go-Ahead buys Marchwood
Wrightbus unveils prototype hybrid double-deck
Optare launches Versa midibus
McKendless buys first King Long bus
Euro Bus Expo
Veolia and Transdev expand in Europe (G)
Quality Line to run first double-deckers (L)
Scania OmniCity double-decks in service (L)
More Scottish routes win kick-start funds (S)
Taxibus service for Edinburgh (S)



FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON braved a chill North Sea wind to photograph a rare Metroliner 400 GT



Regular readers of this column will know that I have shown vehicles of Yorkshire Traction on several occasions and I suspect there may well be others to come from this rich source of rare and interesting buses.

This month, it is one of the company's MCW Metroliner 400GTs, successor to the original 12m Metroliner DR130, which appeared in 1982 and which had much in common with the similar length DR115, many of which were built for China Motor Bus in Hong Kong. The new model (see *Millar's Tales*, p24) differed significantly from the original, most notably in having the engine (a Gardner 6LYT) in-line, rather than the Cummins L10 transversely mounted, and with its overall height reduced to exactly 4m, thus bringing it into line with double-deck coaches from mainland Europe.

Only three were built. Two ran for West Midlands Travel on its Birmingham-London service, painted in Central Coachways' attractive gold-lined blue livery, and the other went to Yorkshire Traction for National Express work.

That illustrated nicely links both operators as it was new to West Midlands, as E906 TOJ, in April 1988 but passed to Yorkshire Traction seven years later when it was re-registered with the appropriate number YTC 858. I chanced upon it in Bridlington in 2005, braving the cold weather and driving rain to obtain my photograph. After all, it was only the middle of June....brrr.



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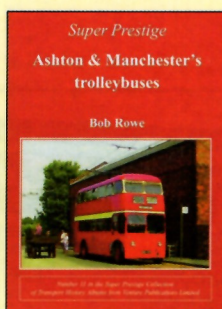


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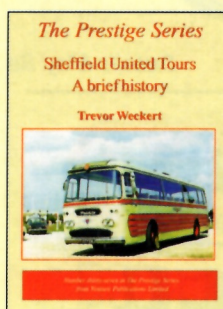
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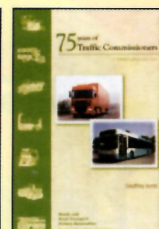
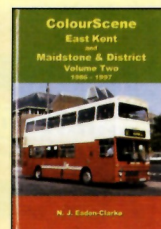
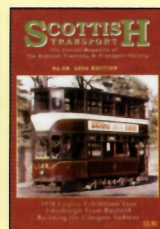
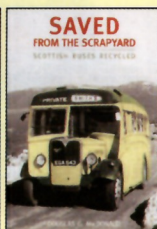
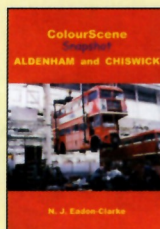
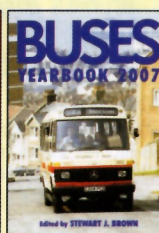
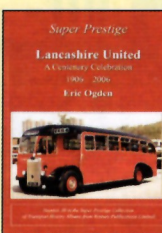
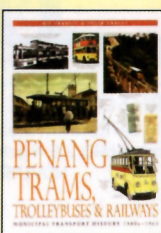
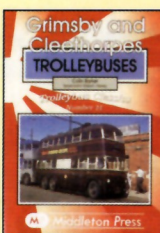
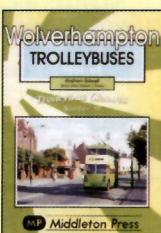
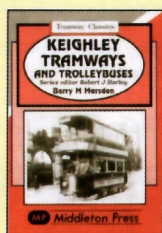
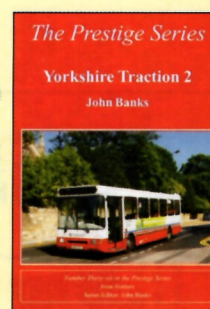
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27619 Wright Volvo Renown GO AHEAD NORTHERN

The Go Ahead Group actively promoted the introduction of easy access low floor buses across the County. In the splendid Northern livery, 4905 registered W905 RBB shows this as it works route 765 to Durham via Conssett. **OCTOBER RELEASE.** ☐



20635 Plaxton Pointer Dart STAGECOACH EAST LONDON

Building our Stagecoach East London fleet our Barking based Pointer Dart looks splendid in red livery displaying the Stagecoach barge logo. Registered N410 MBW, fleet number PD 410 operating from Barking Garage is working route 62 to Barking Gascoigne Estate. **OCTOBER RELEASE.** ☐



99104 25710 1:24 / 1:76 Scale Daimler DMS LONDON BUSES FOREST DISTRICT

Having two sizes of DMS models in our range has created the opportunity not to be missed of reproducing the same model in two scales, Little and Large. Romford's DMS 1877 registered GHM 877N could work on five routes as featured on Large 99104. 66, Leytonstone / 103 Rainham / 139 Ilford Station / 294 Romford Station and 175 Romford. Little 25710 features route 66 to Leytonstone. **NOVEMBER RELEASE.** ☐

LITTLE AND LARGE
A model opportunity
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